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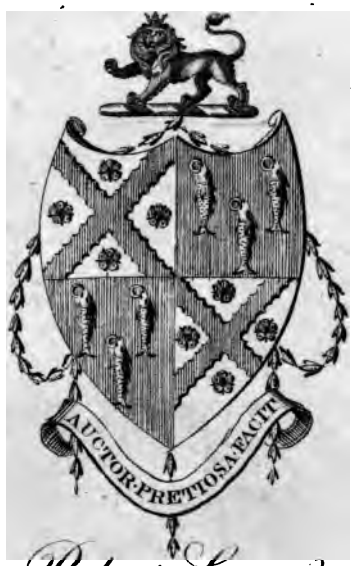

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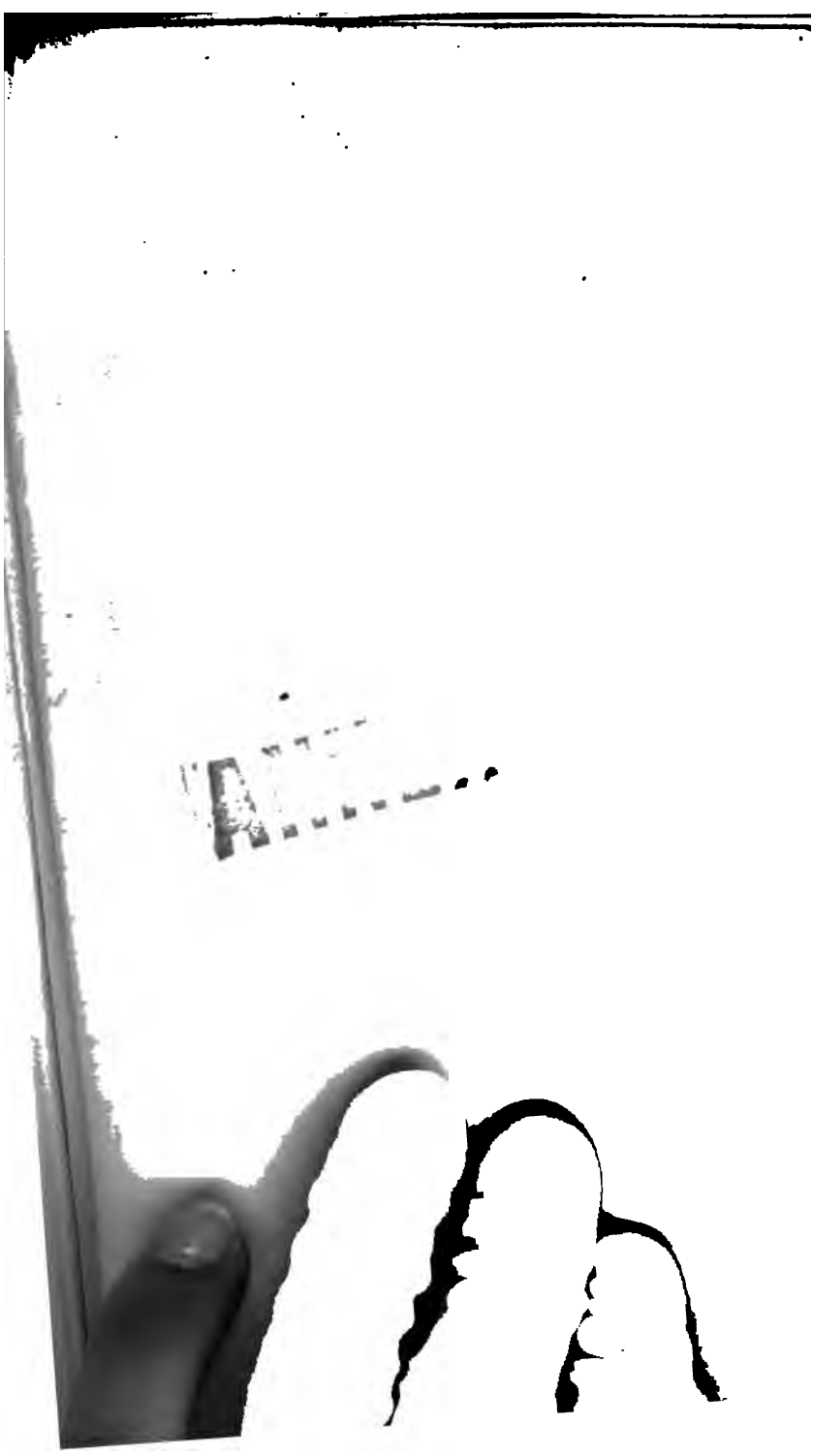

SERMONS

ON

IMPORTANT SUBJECTS,

BY THE LATE REVEREND AND PIOUS

SAMUEL DAVIES, A. M.

Sometime Prefident of the College in New-Jerfey.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

THE FIFTH EDITION.

TO WHICH ARE NOW ADDED

THREE OCCASIONAL SERMONS,

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AND

TWO SERMONS ON OCCASION OF HIS DEATH,

By the Rev. Drs. Gibbons and Finley.

VOL. III.

NEW-YORK:
PRINTED FOR T. S. ARDEN, BOOKSELLER AND STATIONER,
No. 186, PEARL-STREET.
—1802.—

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Rom. ix. 22, 23.—*The veſſels of wrath fitted to deſtruction; and—the veſſels of mercy, which He had afore prepared unto glory.*

THE true notion of the preſent world is, that it is a ſtate of preparation for another; and, therefore, ſuch as we habitually are here, ſuch ſhall we be for ever. Mankind are now forming, like clay in the potter's hands, ſome for honour and ſome for diſhonour; ſome for wrath and ſome for glory. And as the potter does not put his veſſels to their reſpective uſes until they are finiſhed and prepared for them, ſo neither are men removed from the preſent ſtate, and fixed in their reſpective reſidences in the eternal world, until they are prepared, finiſhed and completely fitted for them. The veſſels of mercy are prepared before-hand for that glory with which they ſhall be filled. And, on the other hand, the veſſels of wrath are fitted to deſtruction, and fit for nothing elſe, before they are daſhed to pieces by the iron rod of divine juſtice.

It is a criticiſm worthy to be mentioned, even in this ſolemn place, where I never chuſe to make a parade of uſeleſs learning, that the apoſtle uſes a different form of expreſſion, when ſpeaking of theſe different ſorts of perſons. The preparation of the veſſels of mercy for glory, he aſcribes to God, as his work. Hence he uſes an active verb, referring expreſsly to God as the agent—*the veſſels of mercy,*

which he had afore prepared unto glory. But the fitting or preparing the veſſels of wrath for deſtruction, he does not aſcribe to God, but intimates, that it is their own work. Hence he uſes a paſſive particle—*the veſſels of wrath fitted to deſtruction*—fitted by their own wilful ſin and impenitence, during the long-ſuffering of God towards them, which had a tendency to lead them to repentance.

Veſſels of wrath—How terribly emphatical is this phraſe! Veſſels dreadfully capacious of divine wrath! to be filled to the brim with that burning liquid! But how beautifully ſignificant is the metaphor—*veſſels of mercy!* veſſels formed, prepared, finiſhed, adorned by the gentle and ſkilful hand of divine mercy! veſſels capacious of mercy, and to be filled, to overflow, with glory!

The gracious and ſovereign God, who might juſtly have daſhed theſe veſſels of wrath to pieces as ſoon as ever they became marred clay in his plaſtic hands, endures or bears with them with much long-ſuffering, as well as with the veſſels of mercy: Bears with them, as he has with you, for days, for months and years, notwithſtanding their daring provocations, and ungrateful abuſe of his patience; which nothing but divine patience could bear with ſo long. But all this time, they contracted more and more filth and pollution; they became every day leſs fit for their maſter's uſe, and rendered themſelves more and more fit for deſtruction, and fit for nothing elſe.

And ſhall theſe veſſels of wrath anſwer no valuable uſe in the great houſe of the univerſe? Will they ſerve to furniſh out no apartment of this vaſt building? Will they be of no uſe in this numerous family of reaſonable creatures? Yes, they will furniſh out the regions of hell, a place as neceſſary and uſeful in the univerſe, as it is now conſtituted, as priſons and bedlams upon the earth. They will ſerve as public and terribly illuſtrious monuments of the divine power and juſtice, and the righteous reſentments of heaven

heaven againſt ſin. They will ſerve as loud warnings to all worlds, to deter them from that deſtructive evil. And thus they will anſwer a valuable, and even a benevolent end in the creation, and contribute to the public good; as the execution of criminals tend to guard the laws from violation, and ſo promote the good of ſociety. They will ſerve, as my text informs you, "to ſhew the wrath and make known the power" of God: Their deſtruction will illuſtriouſly diſplay the glory of theſe perfections. The flames of hell will burn dreadfully bright, to reflect a terrible and yet amiable ſplendor upon them: And it is for this terrible but righteous end, among others, that God now endures them with ſo much long-ſuffering; that his perfections and the honour of his government may be the more illuſtriouſly diſplayed in the execution of deſerved puniſhment upon them.

But the veſſels of mercy are intended and prepared for nobler uſes. On them God intends to diſplay the glory, the riches of the glory of his more gentle attributes, his love and grace. With them he intends to furniſh out the many manſions of his heavenly houſe. By them he intends to let all worlds ſee what glorious veſſels he can form, not only of the duſt, but of the ſhattered and polluted fragments of human nature, broken and polluted by the fall of Adam, and by their own.

The view in which I now conſider my text, leads me to confine myſelf to this practical inquiry,

Wherein does preparation for glory, and wherein does fitneſs for deſtruction conſiſt?

Some of you, perhaps, when you heard the text, were ſtruck with horror, and ready to bleſs yourſelves at the ſound: For "now, you thought within yourſelves, we ſhall have a ſermon upon the horrible doctrine of predeſtination." But you ſee I propoſe to conſider the text intirely in a practical view; and therefore your fears are imaginary. Nor do I

chuſe

chuſe to conſider it in this view, to let you ſee with what dexterity I can evade the genuine ſenſe of it, and make a mental reſervation of a doctrine ſo unpopular; but becauſe, whatever elſe the text in its connection may mean, it does naturally lead me to this grand inquiry; and becauſe my preſent deſign is to ſpeak to your hearts, about an affair which you are all concerned and capable to know, and not to perplex your minds with a controverſy, of which not many of you are competent judges. I muſt own, indeed, I am not altogether a ſceptic in that doctrine. It is not an entire blank in my creed; nor am I at all aſhamed to declare my ſentiments in a proper time and place. At preſent I ſhall only tell you, that I cannot be perſuaded God has made ſuch a world as this, without firſt drawing the plan of it in his own omniſcient mind. I cannot think He would produce ſuch a numerous race of reaſonable and immortal creatures, without firſt determining what to do with them. I cannot think the events of time, or the judicial proceſs of the laſt day, will furniſh Him with any new intelligence to enable Him to determine the final ſtates of men more juſtly than He could from eternity.—But away with all controverſial thoughts at preſent; and let an object of more importance engroſs all your attention: For you will find, I am not now going to plunge and drown you in this unfathomable depth. This you may be ſure of, that, if you have not made yourſelves fit for deſtruction, and fit for nothing elſe, by your own wilful ſin, you ſhall never be doomed to it by virtue of any decree of God. And, on the other hand, you may be equally ſure, that he never decreed to admit you into heaven, unleſs you are prepared for it; nor to exclude you, if you are ſo. I now proceed to the grand inquiry,

Wherein does preparation for glory, and wherein does fitneſs for deſtruction conſiſt? This will naturally lead me to inquire into your habitual diſpoſi-

tions

tions and behaviour: For it is by comparing theſe to the nature and quality of the regions of heaven and hell, that you can diſcover which you are fit for. If your temper and diſpoſitions be heavenly and divine, you may be ſure that you ſhall be admitted into thoſe bleſſed manſions. But if, on the other hand, your temper and diſpoſitions be infernal and diabolical; if they be ſuch as are prevalent and univerſal in hell, you may be equally ſure, that, unleſs they are changed, you will be doomed for ever to that diſmal region. This muſt, methinks, appear quite evident to common ſenſe. The righteous Judge of all the earth will always invariably do that which is fit. If you are fit for the enjoyments and ſervices of heaven, you need not fear but he will admit you; never yet has ſuch a ſoul been excluded. And what can you reaſonably deſire more? Would you have heaven encumbered with ſuch as could not be happy, even in the very regions of happineſs, for want of a proper reliſh for the enjoyments there? But, if you are fit only for the infernal priſon, is there not a propriety, as well as juſtice, in your being confined there? The ſame propriety, as that madmen ſhould be ſhut up in bedlam, or notorious criminals in a dungeon. Therefore,

1. Are you fit for heaven? Do you love and delight in God—in a God of infinite purity? If not, the enjoyment of his preſence, and the beatific viſion of his face, which is the principal ingredient of heavenly happineſs, could afford no happineſs to you. Do you delight in the ſervice of God, in contemplating his glories, in celebrating his praiſes, and in the humble forms of worſhip in his church on earth? Do theſe afford you the moſt exalted pleaſure? If not, heaven is no place for you; for theſe are the eternal exerciſes there: And to ſuch of you as have no pleaſure in them, the heavenly ſtate would be an eternal drudgery. Do you delight in holineſs? If not, what would you do in the region of holineſs?

Alas!

Alas! to you it would be an unnatural element. Are the ſaints, thoſe whom the world perhaps calls ſo with a ſneer, becauſe they make it their great buſineſs to be holy in all manner of converſation, are theſe your favourite companions? Is their ſociety peculiarly delightful to you? And are they the more agreeable to you, by how much the more holy they are? If not, what would you do among the holy inhabitants of heaven? With what pleaſure could you mingle in ſociety with them, while your temper and theirs are ſo directly contrary? Are your hearts full of ardent love and benevolence to mankind? If not, how would you breathe in the pure element of perfect love?—Without ſuch diſpoſitions as theſe, you are no more fit for heaven than a ſick man for a feaſt, a ſwine for a palace, or a blind man to view the ſplendors of the ſun; and, therefore, you may be certain, that God, who will never do any thing that is unfit, will not admit you there, while you continue ſuch as you now are.

You muſt alſo conſider, that if you are fit for thoſe pure and bleſſed regions, it is God that has made you ſo, by his own almighty power; *He that hath wrought you for this ſelf-ſame thing is God*, 2 Cor. v. 5. and you have been deeply ſenſible that the work was indeed his, was divine and godlike, and beyond the utmoſt efforts of your degenerate nature. You are able indeed to fit yourſelves for deſtruction; that you can eaſily do; and that, I am afraid, ſome of you have effectually done already. But it is God alone that can make you fit for the inheritance of the ſaints in light. And have you ever been the ſubjects of this divine operation? Have you ever felt the power of almighty grace opening your blinded minds—breaking your ſtony hearts, and melting them into floods of ingenuous ſorrow, under the warm beams of a Saviour's love, like ſnow before the ſun? Have you ever felt it ſubduing your favourite ſins, and making them more bitter to you than death, and implanting

implanting and cheriſhing every grace and virtue in your ſouls? Has the Holy Spirit turned the prevailing bent of your ſouls towards holineſs, ſo that you eſteem it the principal ornament of your nature, and make it the object of your eager deſires, and moſt vigorous purſuit? Does holineſs appear to you amiable in itſelf, and not only a pre-requiſite to your happineſs, but the principal ingredient of it? And is heaven itſelf the more endeared to you by this conſideration, that it is the region of pure, unmingled holineſs, that no unclean thing can enter there, and that even the way that leads to it is holy? If theſe things are not matters of experience with you, you may be ſure you are not *afore prepared for glory.*

Let us now take a view of the oppoſite diſpoſitions and we ſhall make the ſame diſcovery:—Suppoſe your hearts are ſet upon the enjoyments of this life, as your principal happineſs; ſuppoſe you are chiefly ſolicitous and laborious to heap up riches, or to indulge your ſenſual luſts and appetites; ſuppoſing this be the ruling paſſion of your ſouls, are you fit for heaven? In heaven there are none of theſe low and ſordid enjoyments: And what pleaſure would you have there, who have a taſte only for theſe things? You are indeed fit to dig in the earth, like moles, and ſteal the ſerpent's food: You are fit to ſcrape up riches; fit to wallow in the mire of guilty and debauched pleaſures; fit to live in this world, could you always make your reſidence in it: This groſs, impure, earthly element ſuits your depraved conſtitutions. But can you once imagine you are fit for heaven; fit to breathe in that pure ſalubrious air; fit to ſhare in thoſe refined and ſpiritual enjoyments; fit to join in the exalted employments of ſeraphs, while this is your prevailing temper? Surely, no. And what then will become of you? The impure and groſs region of this world, ſo agreeable to you, will not always laſt, and you will not probably live in it as long as it does laſt; but death, ere long, will tear you

you away from all that is dear to you under the ſun. And, alas! whither then ſhall you go? where then ſhall you take up your eternal reſidence?—I leave you to pauſe and think about it.

Suppoſe the ſervice of God be a wearineſs to you, and the thoughts of Him unwelcome to your minds: ſuppoſe your hearts are full of angry malignant paſſions: in ſhort, ſuppoſe you love ſin more than holineſs, can you flatter yourſelves you are fit for heaven? Alas! it would be as unnatural an element to you as for a fiſh to live out of water, or you to live in it.—But the farther illuſtration of this will fall under the next head; therefore,

2. Inquire, Whether your temper and diſpoſition be not infernal and diabolical, and ſuch as renders you fit for deſtruction, and for nothing elſe? Are your hearts deſtitute of the love of God? "No, you anſwer; we thank God we have never been ſo bad as that comes to." But if you love God, whence is it that you have ſo few affectionate thoughts of Him? that you do not ſtudy to pleaſe Him in all things, and delight in his ſervice? If you love God, how comes it that you do not keep his commandments, which is the grand deciſive teſt of love? Alas! inſtead of loving him, are not your hearts diſaffected to him? As evidences of this, may I not produce your diſlike to ſerious thoughts of him, your averſion to his ſervice, your diſregard to his will as the rule of your conduct, and your headlong propenſity to follow your own pleaſure? Do not the murmurings and inſurrections of your hearts againſt him and his diſpenſations, your uneaſy rebellious ſpirit under his providences, your averſion to his ſervice, do not theſe ſhew that you are really diſaffected to him? Now this is the very temper of hell; this is the conſtituent of a devil; the very worſt ingredient in that infernal compoſition; and therefore, unleſs this temper be changed, you muſt dwell with devils for ever: It is fit all the enemies of God ſhould be

be ſhut up together in one vaſt priſon. It is unfit that rebels and traitors ſhould always run at large, or mingle with loyal ſubjects. Alas! ſirs, a ſoul without the love of God is devilized already, ripe for deſtruction, and fit for nothing elſe.

Again, Are there not ſome of you who have no pleaſure in devotion, no delight in converſing with God in his ordinances? The poſture of humble worſhippers at the throne of grace is not eaſy and agreeable to you; and hence that you have prayerleſs families and prayerleſs cloſets; and if you join in public worſhip once a week, it is a mere cuſtomary formality. You cannot bear to wean your thoughts and tongues from temporal affairs in the few hours devoted to the ſervice of God, though they make up but one day in ſeven; you do not delight in religious converſation, but it ſtrikes you dumb, like the man without the wedding garment. Well, in the infernal regions you will have as little of this exerciſe as you could wiſh. The patient will then be hopeleſs and incurable, and therefore no farther means will be uſed with him. Then you will be no more troubled with prayers, bibles, ſermons, religious converſation, or the tedious hours of the Lord's Day. And, ſince you have no taſte for ſuch exerciſes, is it not fit you ſhould be ſent into thoſe ungodly regions, where you ſhall never be employed in them?

Again, Are not the minds of ſome of you defiled with all manner of ſin and moral pollutions? And do not theſe render you fit only for that region of corruption and impurity? Do you not indulge an angry, contentious, unforgiving, malicious temper? Well, that is the very temper of hell, and renders you fit for it. Nay, theſe outrageous paſſions, when broke looſe from reſtraint, will create a hell in your own breaſts, and not only expoſe you to puniſhment, according to juſtice, but become the ingredients of your puniſhment, according to the courſe of nature. Do not ſome of you indulge yourſelves in backbiting,

and all the baſe malignant arts of defamation, and perhaps are firebrands in the neighbourhood where you live! Well, in hell you ſhall have enough of this work; and, while you indulge this ſpirit, you are preparing yourſelves for that land of univerſal hoſtility and revenge. Is not curſing and ſwearing the familiar language of ſome of you? Well, this is the language of hell; and you are now practiſing the infernal dialect, and preparing to converſe with the ghoſts below in their own ſtile, in the region of imprecation and blaſphemy. Do not ſome of you live in the practice of the works of the devil; that is, of thoſe works to which he tempts you, and in which he has perſiſted, who was a ſinner from the beginning? Are you not then fit for that everlaſting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels? Even the gentle lips of Jeſus himſelf would tell you, as he did the Jews, that *You are of your father the devil*, John viii. 44. ſince you habitually do his works. And is it not fit you ſhould be doomed to the ſociety of your infernal father?

Do you not find your hearts are habitually hard and inſenſible? or if you have ſome kind of repentance, it is only a ſervile horror, extorted remorſe, and involuntary pangs of deſperate agony. This is the very kind of repentance in hell, where they ſtill love ſin, and yet cannot but upbraid and torment themſelves, becauſe they have ruined themſelves by indulging it. Conſcience tortures them with the keeneſt reflections; but they feel no kindly ingenuous relentings; no generous ſorrows, proceeding from a ſenſe of the intrinſic vileneſs and baſeneſs of ſin, and from a ſincere diſintereſted love to God and holineſs. Hence their repentance is only a puniſhment, but has no tendency to their reformation. And is not this the very nature of your repentance at preſent?

But I need not dwell long upon this inquiry. It is enough to tell you, in ſhort, that if you are ſtill

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in your natural ſtate; if you ſtill retain that temper which is natural to you as the degenerate ſons of Adam, without any ſupernatural change; that eſtrangement from God; that diſaffection to him; that carnality and earthly-mindedneſs; that blindneſs and inſenſibility about divine things; that preſumption, ſecurity and love of lawleſs pleaſure; I ſay, if this be ſtill your prevailing temper, you are not meet for the heavenly inheritance; for, in order to be heirs of that, you muſt be born again of God. But you are fitted for deſtruction; for by *nature you are children of wrath*, Eph. ii. 3. and while you continue ſuch, you muſt be *veſſels of wrath*. Therefore bring the matter to a ſhort iſſue, by this deciſive inquiry: "Have I ever been born again? Have I ever experienced ſuch a mighty change in the temper of my mind, as may, with propriety, be called a *new birth*, or a *new creation?* For, *if any man be in Chriſt, he is a new creature; old things are paſſed away, and all things are become new.* 2 Cor. v. 17. Have I thus been renewed in the ſpirit of my mind? or am I ſtill the ſame *old man*, with my old affections and luſts?—This, my brethren, is the grand deciſive inquiry; for if you have been begotten again, St. Peter tells you, it is to *an inheritance incorruptible, and that fadeth not away; reſerved in the heavens for you.* 1 Pet. i. 4. But Jeſus, the friend of ſinners; Jeſus, who never pronounced a harſh ſentence, and who never will exclude from heaven one ſoul that is fit for it, nor doom to deſtruction one ſoul that is fit for any thing elſe; even Jeſus himſelf has ſtrongly aſſured you with his own gracious lips, that *except you be born again*, born of the Spirit, as well as of water, *you cannot ſee the kingdom of heaven: for that which is born of the fleſh is fleſh*, John iii. 3, 5, 6. carnal, corrupt, unholy, and utterly unfit for that ſpiritual, pure and holy kingdom.

Here I would enlarge a little upon an obſervation, which I juſt hinted at before, namely, That theſe corrupt

corrupt diſpoſitions are not only criminal, and therefore will bring upon you the penalty of the divine law, according to juſtice, but that they are, in their own nature, deſtructive, and therefore, according to the courſe of nature, will be your ruin. Suppoſe God had made no poſitive conſtitution to exclude you from heaven; yet while you have no reliſh for the employments and enjoyments of that ſtate, it is impoſſible, in the nature of things, you ſhould be happy there. As you muſt have animal ſenſes to render you capable of animal pleaſures, ſo you muſt have ſpiritual ſenſes to render you capable of the pure ſpiritual pleaſures of paradiſe; and without theſe you can no more be happy there than a ſtone can enjoy the pleaſures of an animal, or a beaſt thoſe of reaſon: You would be miſerable wretches in paradiſe itſelf. Do but conſider in what things the bliſs of heaven conſiſts, and methinks you will rather fear, than hope and deſire admiſſion there. Is religion ſo pleaſing a thing to you, that you might expect you ſhould be completely happy if it were but perfected in you? Alas! are there not a thouſand things more agreeable to ſome of you? But in heaven there are none of theſe things, and how do you expect to be happy there? There muſt be another heaven created for you, a Mahometan paradiſe of ſenſual pleaſures, or elſe your temper muſt be changed. The paradiſe of ſaints and angels does not ſuit your vitiated taſte.

Farther, Suppoſe God ſhould not inflict any poſitive puniſhment upon you with his own immediate hand, but only ſuffer the courſe of nature to run on, and let your corrupt diſpoſitions have full ſcope and range without reſtraint, would not theſe diſpoſitions alone create a hell within you! Anger, malice, envy, and every wicked and turbulent paſſion againſt God and his creatures, will break out into outrageous hurricanes, when the kind reſtraints under which they now lie are taken off, and they will agitate and diſtract your ſouls for ever, and render you incapable of

of all peace, ſerenity and joy. Then alſo, all temporal enjoyments, the objects of your love and deſire, and the only things you have now to allay your raging thirſt for happineſs, will be for ever torn from you, and leave you to famiſh in a diſmal void; and then you will pine away with eager, impatient, inſatiable deſires, which will gnaw your hearts, and prey upon your ſpirits like hungry vultures. Suppoſe you were now ſtript naked of every enjoyment, and nothing left you but bare being, with your uſual capacity of enjoyment; ſuppoſe you were deprived of the light of the ſun, the products of the earth, the comforts of ſociety, and every imaginable bleſſing, and doomed to wander, forlorn and hungry, in ſome diſmal deſert, how conſummately miſerable would this privation alone render you! But this will be the doom of the ungodly, as ſoon as death breaks their connections with this world. They muſt leave all their enjoyments behind them, and yet carry their eager deſires, their inſatiable avarice of happineſs, along with them; and theſe will make them capacious veſſels of pain; for a capacity of enjoyment not ſatisfied is a dreadful capacity of poſitive miſery. Thus, you ſee your deſtruction comes upon you according to the courſe of nature; and you will die eternally, though the hand of the executioner ſhould never touch you, as the unavoidable reſult of your preſent temper, the deadly diſeaſe under which you labour.

And hence you may ſee, by the way, that it is no act of cruelty or injuſtice in the Supreme Judge, to ſhut you up in the priſon of hell; for what elſe ſhould he do with you, when you are fit for no other place? Is it cruel to exclude the ſick from entertainments, or perſons infected with the plague from the ſociety of the ſound and healthy? Is it cruel to confine madmen in bedlam, or criminals in priſon? Certainly no. Therefore God & his throne will be guiltleſs for ever.

And now, my dear brethren, have any of you been convinced that this is really your caſe? That your temper

temper and conduct is ſuch as at once renders and proves you utterly unfit for heaven, and, as it were, naturalizes and ſeaſons you for the infernal regions? Alas! this is a ſhocking and alarming diſcovery indeed: but, bleſſed be God, you have made it in time: you have made it while in the land of hope, and in a ſtate of trial; and therefore there is reaſon to hope, that, if you now take the alarm, and earneſtly uſe the means of grace, your condition, bad as it is, may be happily altered; and you, who are now fit for nothing but deſtruction, may yet be made meet for the inheritance of the ſaints in light. It is becauſe there is ſome reaſon for this hope, that I have honeſtly expoſed theſe alarming and unpopular things to your view. You muſt know them ſooner or later: and if you ſhould not know them until you fall into deſtruction, alas! it will be then too late. Believe me, my brethren, theſe things do not proceed from a moroſe malevolent heart, nor are they intended to drive you into deſpair. I ſpeak to you with melting pity and affectionate benevolence; and inſtead of driving you into deſpair, my deſign is to ſave you from it for ever, and bring you to have a good hope through grace. And as the evidence of what I have offered is ſo plain to common ſenſe, do not pretend you cannot underſtand me, and do not know what I would aim at. I am only inculcating upon you this ſelf-evident truth, that unleſs you are prepared for heaven, you ſhall not be admitted; and that, if you are fit for nothing but deſtruction, you muſt be deſtroyed. Can any mathematical demonſtration be more plain than this? And are any of you ſo void of ſenſe, reaſon and faith, as not to underſtand and believe it.

I now preſume, that ſuch of you as have made this diſcovery with regard to yourſelves, are alſo convinced, that you cannot poſſibly eſcape deſtruction, unleſs your preſent temper be changed, and quite a new frame of ſpirit given you.

And

And who, do you think, can work this happy change in your hearts! If you are ſo vain and ignorant as to flatter yourſelves that you can effect it in your own ſtrength, make the trial, and you will ſoon be undeceived. It is God alone that can work in you both to will and to do. My text tells you, it is He that prepares the veſſels of mercy for glory: It is his Holy Spirit alone that is equal to the arduous work.

But in what way is this influence to be expected? Is it in a courſe of impenitent ſinning? of preſumption and ſecurity? of ſloth and negligence? No; to expect it in that way, is to tempt the Lord your God. But ſuch of you as would eſcape the damnation of hell; ſuch of you as have any deſire to be for ever happy, hear me, ſeriouſly hear me, and I will tell you, in a few plain words, what you muſt do, if you would expect the aids of divine grace to prepare you for glory.

You muſt immediately think ſeriouſly of your condition: you muſt labour impartially to know the truth of your caſe: pry into the dreadful ſecrets of wickedneſs in your hearts: review your ſinful lives: reflect upon the purity and juſtice of God and his law, and what you have deſerved for a whole life of unnatural rebellion againſt him: read and hear the word of life with ſolemnity and attention, and uſe all proper means to furniſh your minds with religious knowlege. It may pain you at firſt to confine your minds to ſuch objects; but it muſt be done: and there is no diſputing againſt neceſſity: beſides, the pain is medicinal; it will contribute to the recovery of your dying ſouls.

Again, You muſt accuſtom yourſelves to frequent importunate prayer. If ever you be ſaved, or prepared for ſalvation, it will be in anſwer to prayer: therefore engage in it, perſevere in it, and never give over until you obtain your requeſt.

Further, You muſt guard againſt every thing that tends to divert your minds from this grand concern; as exceſſive hurries and cares about earthly things, vain

vain and vicious company, and every avoidable temptation.

Finally, You muſt perſevere in this courſe, if you hope to ſucceed; and never reſt until you feel the diſpoſitions of heaven wrought in your ſouls. A pang of remorſe, a ſerious fit, a tranſient prayer, will not ſuffice, but you muſt hold on your way to the laſt. You may expect difficulties in this new courſe, and you will probably meet with more than you can now foreſee or expect. But you muſt break through all; for your immortal intereſt, your all is at ſtake.

This is the courſe I would adviſe you to, if ever you hope to be prepared for glory. I cannot give you any the leaſt encouragement in any other way. If any other can ſhew you a more eaſy, and yet ſafe courſe, and produce ſufficient authority for it, you may take it: but, for my part, if I teach you what I learn in my bible, I can give you no other directions; nor do I expect to be ſaved in any eaſier way myſelf. And therefore, if you will chuſe another, you muſt be anſwerable for it. Remember I warn you againſt it and would not be acceſſary to it for ten thouſand worlds.

Now, if this courſe muſt be taken, I aſk when, do you think, muſt it be begun? Will you appoint to-morrow, or next year, or old age, or a ſick-bed, for that purpoſe? Alas! you may never live to ſee that time. Before then you may drop into deſtruction, as rotten fruit fall to the ground by their own weight. Therefore now, this preſent fleeting now, is the only time you are ſure of; and conſequently, this is the only proper time to begin this courſe. Now then, now, while my voice is ſounding in your ears, form the reſolution, and carry it into immediate execution. Bear it home upon your hearts to your houſes, and there let it dwell until the great work is done. O! that you did but know its importance and neceſſity! then you could not delay it one moment longer.

And now, if you have any regard for the God that made you, for the Lord that bought you, or for your own

own everlaſting happineſs, take this courſe immediately.—If you have any need of excitements, take the following.

1. Conſider your preſent dangerous ſituation. You hang over the pit of deſtruction by the ſlender thread of life, held up only by the hand of an angry God, as we hold a ſpider, or ſome poiſonous inſect, over a fire, ready to throw it in. You are ripe for deſtruction, and therefore in danger every day, every hour, every moment of falling into it. You are as fit for deſtruction as a murderer for the gallows, or a mortified limb to be cut off. Such polluted veſſels of wrath muſt be thrown out of the way into ſome dark corner in hell, that they may no more incumber or diſgrace the more honourable apartments of the univerſe. And is this a ſituation in which it becomes you to be merry, and gay, and thoughtleſs, and eager after the trifles of time? O! does it not become you rather to be on your knees at the throne of grace, and vigorouſly preſſing into the kingdom of God?

2. Reflect with how much long-ſuffering God has endured you, notwithſtanding all your audacious and repeated provocations. One would think one day's ſinning againſt ſo holy and gracious a God, by a creature ſo deeply obliged to him, would make your caſe deſperate, and that the evening of ſuch a day would be the hour of your execution. But he has patiently borne with you for days, for months, for years, perhaps for ſcores of years. And all this time he has followed you with his bleſſings every moment, and granted you the means of preparation for glory. And yet you have been thoughtleſs, diſobedient, ungrateful, rebellious ſtill. How juſtly then may he inflict puniſhment upon you! And how induſtriouſly will his goodneſs and ſeverity, his mercy and juſtice, be diſplayed in his treatment of you! What could you have deſired more, in point of time, opportunity, perſuaſives, than you have enjoyed? Will it not then appear evident, that your deſtruction is entirely of yourſelf,

and that, as I told you before, God and his throne will be guiltleſs for ever?

3. Conſider how dreadful will be your puniſhment, if you ſhould periſh at laſt by your preſent wilful negligence. My text tells you what will be the deſign of your puniſhment; it will be to ſhew the wrath of God, and make his power known. Such will be your puniſhment, as will be fit to ſhew that it is almighty power that inflicts it, and that it is an almighty God who is angry with you. It will be his profeſſed deſign to diſplay the dreadful glory of his vindictive attributes upon you, particularly his juſtice, as the ſupreme Magiſtrate of the univerſe: and even his juſtice deſerves to be diſplayed; for juſtice is not that ugly, grim, horrible thing, which criminals imagine. In a ruler, eſpecially in the ſupreme and univerſal Ruler, juſtice is not only a majeſtic and terrible, but it is a lovely, amiable, ingratiating attribute, eſſential to his character, and to the public good, and ſo it appears to all competent judges; that is, to all who are not ſelf-flattering criminals, and therefore parties. The diſplay of this attribute, therefore, upon proper objects, is neceſſary to give a full view of the Deity to the world; to repreſent him as he is.

Now, whatever attribute of his he intends to diſplay in any of his works, he always does it in a manner worthy of himſelf. When his deſign was to diſplay and glorify his creative power, wiſdom, and goodneſs, ſee! what a ſtately, well-furniſhed univerſe he ſpoke into being! What a magnificent, Godlike building! When his deſign was to ſhew the riches of his grace towards our guilty race, what wonders did he perform! What inimitable exploits of condeſcenſion and love! His only begotten Son muſt become a man, muſt ſtruggle with all the calamities of life for three-and-thirty long and painful years, muſt expire in torture upon an ignominious croſs, and redeem the guilty with the blood of his heart. This was Godlike love and grace indeed, beyond all example.

ample. O! *Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity?* Micah vii. 18. He is as much diſtinguiſhed from all other beings by the wonders of his love and grace as by the eternity of his exiſtence, or by that wiſdom which planned the univerſe, or that power which produced it out of nothing. When, in proſecution of the ſame deſign, he intends to give a farther diſplay of the riches of his glorious grace upon the veſſels of mercy, what Godlike proviſions hath he made for them! *Eye hath not ſeen nor ear heard, nor has it entered into the heart of man to conceive, the things he hath prepared for them.* He hath prepared for them a city, ſuch a glorious reſidence, that he is not aſhamed to be called their God. He is not aſhamed to own the relation, becauſe he has acted up to the character, and worthy of himſelf. *Heb.* xi. 16. And when his deſign is to ſhew his avenging wrath, and make his punitive power known; when it is to ſhew what Godlike puniſhments he can inflict, ſuch as may, by their terror, declare him to be the Author, and ſerve as loud warnings to all preſent, and, perhaps, future creations, to deter them from the breach of his ſacred laws; and when the ſubjects of the puniſhment are ſtrong capacious veſſels of wrath, fit for nothing but deſtruction; I ſay, when this is the caſe, what Godlike vengeance will he execute! what ſignal, unexampled puniſhment will he inflict! The deſign of puniſhment, which is not the reformation of the criminal, but the benefit of others, and the diſplay of his perfections, require that he give a looſe to all the terrors of his power. And what miracles of miſery, what terrible illuſtrious monuments of vengeance will that perform and erect! As far ſurpaſſing all the puniſhments inflicted by mortals, as the creation of the world out of nothing exceeds all the works of human art.

And are you proof againſt the energy of ſuch conſiderations as theſe? Then you are dreadfully fitted for deſtruction indeed! For the ſtrongeſt perſuaſives

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to deter you from it, which God himſelf can reveal, or the human mind conceive, have no weight upon you!

But may I hope that I ſhall ſucceed at leaſt with ſome of you this day to fly from this tremendous deſtruction, into which you are this moment ready to fall? Alas! it is hard, if even a ſtranger cannot prevail with ſo much as one ſoul, in ſo large an aſſembly, and in a point ſo reaſonable, and ſo ſtrongly enforced by your own intereſt. But I muſt leave this warning with you, and if you do not remember it now, you will remember it millions of ages hence, when the remembrance of it will torment you with intolerable anguiſh.

There are ſundry in this aſſembly, I doubt not, who, by comparing their diſpoſitions with the nature of heavenly happineſs, may make the welcome diſcovery, that they are, in ſome meaſure, prepared for it. To ſuch happy ſouls I have time only to ſay, that if this be your character, you may be ſure that immenſe happineſs ſhall be yours: your preſent heavenly temper is a certain pledge and earneſt of it. You may be ſure God would never make you fit for it, and then exclude you from it.

And, on the other hand, if you find that the diſpoſitions of hell are ſubdued in you, aſſure yourſelves God will not doom you to it. Can you think he would gain your hearts and allure your love, and then bid you depart from him, to languiſh and pine away with the eager anxious paintings of diſappointed bereaved love? Will he doom you to reſide for ever among thoſe whoſe works you deteſt, and whoſe ſociety you abhor? No; he will thoroughly prepare you, and make you holy, and then advance you to dwell for ever in that preſence which you love, in the element of holineſs; to breathe in that clear refined air; to live in that wholeſome climate, ſo agreeable to your conſtitution; to be employed in thoſe ſervices in which you delight; to enjoy that ſublime and delicate

cate happineſs which you reliſh, and to converſe in that ſociety which you affect, and which is of the ſame temper and ſpirit with you.—And for that bleſſed region may we all be prepared, and there may we all meet at laſt, to enjoy that endleſs felicity which awaits thoſe who firmly put their confidence in God, through Jeſus Chriſt! Amen.

SERMON XLIV.

THE *NATURE* AND *NECESSITY* OF TRUE *REPENTANCE*.

ACTS xvii. 30. *And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent.*

WE here find St. Paul in as learned an aſſembly as perhaps he ever appeared in. We find him in Athens, a city of Greece, famous all over the world for learning; a city where Socrates, Plato, and the moſt illuſtrious philoſophers of antiquity, lived and taught. We find him in the famous court of Areopagus, or Mars-Hill, where the wiſeſt men and beſt philoſophers of this wiſe and philoſophical city were met together; in the ſame court where Socrates, the moſt likely candidate in all the heathen world for the honours of martyrdom, had been accuſed and condemned, and for very much the ſame crime, namely, introducing a foreign religion, and bringing the gods of the country into contempt. And how does the apoſtle conduct himſelf in theſe critical circumſtances? Why, inſtead of amuſing them with a learned harangue; inſtead of confirming them in their idolatry, and vindicating himſelf, by publicly profeſſing, with poor Socrates, that he worſhipped the gods of the country, and ſacrificed at the eſtabliſhed altars; inſtead

ſtead of this, I ſay, the apoſtle boldly, though in a very handſome and genteel manner, expoſes their ſuperſtitions, calls them off from their idols to the worſhip of the one true God, the Maker and Ruler of heaven and earth; and, having aſſerted theſe fundamental articles of natural religion, he introduces the glorious peculiarities of revelation, and preached Jeſus Chriſt to them, as the Saviour and Judge of the world.

In my text he inculcates the great goſpel-duty of repentance as binding upon all mankind (philoſophers and judges, as well as the illiterate vulgar, in Athens) as well as in the moſt barbarous countries of the earth.

The times of this ignorance God winked at. By the times of ignorance, he means the times previous to the propagation of the goſpel in the heathen world, who for many ages were ſunk into the moſt groſs ignorance of the true God, and into the moſt abſurd and impious ſuperſtition and idolatry, notwithſtanding the loud remonſtrances of the light of reaſon, and the various leſſons of the book of creation, ſo legible to all. When it is ſaid that God winked at theſe times of ignorance, it may mean, as our tranſlators ſeem to have underſtood it, that God ſeemed to connive at, or not to take notice of this univerſal ignorance that had overſpread the world, ſo as to ſend his prophets to them for their reformation. In this view, there is a ſtrong antitheſis between the firſt and the laſt parts of my text. *q. d.* "God once ſeemed to connive at the idolatry and ſuperſtition of mankind, and to let them go on, without ſending his meſſengers to call them to repentance; and in theſe dark times their impenitence was the leſs inexcuſable. But now the caſe is altered; now he has introduced a glorious day, and he plainly and loudly calls and commands all men every where to repent; and therefore, if you now continue impenitent, you are utterly inexcuſable." Or the word may be rendered, *God overlooked* theſe times of ignorance: he overlooked them by way of diſpleaſure: he would not favour ſuch guilty times with a gracious

gracious glance of his eye; and in righteous diſpleaſure, he did not ſo much as give them an explicit call to repentance: or he overlooked them by way of forbearance. Ignorant and idolatrous as the world was, he did not deſtroy it, but bore it from age to age, with a deſign to publiſh a more explicit command to repent: and now that time is come; that time, for the ſake of which a long-ſuffering God had borne with a guilty world ſo long. Now he commands all men every where to repent; all men, Gentiles as well as Jews: every where, in the dark heathen lands, as well as in the enlightened ſpot of Judea.

Repentance is indeed a duty enjoined by our natural reaſon, and ſtrongly enforced by the Jewiſh religion; but it is the goſpel that affords the ſtrongeſt motives and allurements, and the beſt helps and advantages for repentance. The goſpel was firſt introduced by a loud call to repentance: *Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand*, was the united cry of John the Baptiſt, of Chriſt, and his diſciples. And St. Paul ſums up the ſubſtance of his preaching in theſe two articles, *Repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jeſus Chriſt.* Acts xx. 21.

Repentance is univerſally acknowledged to be an eſſential ingredient in the religion of a ſinner. They who deny the chriſtian religion, and particularly the neceſſity of Chriſt's death to make atonement for ſin, they deny it upon this ſuppoſition, that the light of nature teaches us the neceſſity of repentance, and that alone is a ſufficient atonement. Thus, even Infidels, Jews, Pagans and Mahometans, agree in aſſerting the neceſſity of repentance. It is this grand catholic uncontroverted duty, and not the little diſputable peculiarity of a party, that I am now about to inculcate upon you: And *he that hath an ear to hear, let him hear.*

But here, I hope, you are ready to requeſt me, "Pray let us know what repentance is, before you exhort us to it. How may we know what it is to repent, and whether we have truly repented or not?"

If

If this be your deſire, it directly coincides with my main deſign: and I ſhall endeavour, with the utmoſt plainneſs and faithfulneſs, to tell you what goſpel-repentance is, and help you to determine whether ever you have been the ſubjects of it.

Now it is evident, both from ſcripture and common ſenſe, that every pang of ſorrow for ſin, and every inſtance of reformation, is not that repentance which we have now under conſideration. If horror of conſcience, and fears of hell, could conſtitute true repentance, then Judas was a true penitent; for his horror and fear was ſo great, that he could not live under it. If ſudden pangs of terror and remorſe, with ſome reſolutions to amend, could conſtitute true repentance, then Felix, the heathen governor, was a true penitent; for we are told, that, *while Paul reaſoned before him, concerning temperance, righteouſneſs, and the judgment to come, he trembled*, Acts xxiv. 25. and ſeemed reſolved to give him another hearing on theſe ſubjects. If a reformation in many inſtances were the ſame thing with repentance, then Herod, the murderer of John the Baptiſt, was a true penitent; for we are told, *he heard John gladly, and did many things at his exhortation.* Mark vi. 20. Theſe knew nothing of repentance unto life; and therefore we may feel what they felt, and yet remain impenitent.

I ſcarcely think there are any of you ſo hardy and reprobated of God, as never to have experienced any ſort of repentance. It is likely there is not one in this aſſembly but has ſometimes been ſcared with dreadful apprehenſions of death, hell, and the conſequences of ſin; and perhaps you have cried and wept to think of your ſinful life, and trembled to think what would be the end of it. You have alſo prayed to God to forgive you, and reſolved and promiſed you would reform. Nay, it is poſſible, the terrors of the Lord and a ſenſe of guilt, may have almoſt overwhelmed and diſtracted you, haunted you from day to day, and diſturbed your nightly ſlumbers. On theſe accounts you conclude, perhaps,

perhaps, that you are true penitents: but, alas! after all this, you may be but impenitent ſinners. True evangelical repentance has the following diſtinguiſhing characteriſtics; by which I requeſt you to examine yourſelves.

I. It extends to the heart as well as to the practice. Every true penitent, indeed, has an affecting ſenſe of the many ſins and guilty imperfections of his life; but then his repentance does not ſtop there, but he looks into the horrid arcana, the ſecrets of wickedneſs within. He traces up theſe corrupt ſtreams to the more corrupt fountain in his heart, from which they flow. A blind mind, a ſtupid heart, a heart diſaffected to God, that could live content for months, for years, without loving God, a heart dead to his ſervice, a heart inſenſible of eternal things, a heart exceſſively ſet upon things below, a ſecure conſcience, a ſtubborn ungovernable will; theſe, to the true penitent, appear the greateſt crimes, while, by a thoughtleſs world, they are hardly noticed as ſlight imperfections. Hence when his walk in the eyes of men is unblameable, and even imitable, he ſtill finds daily occaſion for repentance and humiliation before God. For O! his heart, or his inward temper, is not ſuch as it ſhould be: he does not love God nor man as he knows he ſhould: he does not delight in the ſervice of God as he ſhould: every thought, every motion of his heart towards forbidden objects alarms him, like a ſymptom of the plague, or the ſtirring of an enemy in ambuſh; and he is immediately in arms to make reſiſtance. The world in general are very well pleaſed if the matter of their actions be good, and if they abſtain from what is materially evil: but this does not ſatisfy the true penitent: he narrowly inſpects the principles, the motives, and the ends of his actions; and there he finds ſufficient cauſe for mortification and ſorrow, even when his actions in themſelves are lawful and good. In ſhort, every true penitent is a critic upon his own

heart; and there he finds conſtant cauſe for repentance while in this imperfect ſtate.

The proof of this is ſo evident, that I need hardly mention it. Can you ſuppoſe it will ſatisfy a true lover of God and goodneſs, juſt to have a clean outſide, while his heart is a mere maſs of corruption? Will it content ſuch a one, that he performs all the outward duties of religion, if there be no life or ſpirit in them? Will God account that man truly penitent, who thinks it enough that he is not guilty of open acts of wickedneſs, though he indulges it, and loves it in his heart? No; ſuch repentance is a ſhallow, ſuperficial thing, and is good for nothing. David's repentance reached his heart. Hence, in his penitential pſalm (li.) he not only confeſſes his being guilty of the blood of Uriah, but that he was ſhapen in iniquity, and conceived in ſin, and earneſtly prays, *Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right ſpirit within me.* Pſalm li. 5, 6, 10. And he is deeply ſenſible of the want of truth or integrity in the inward parts.

Now, my brethren, if this be an eſſential ingredient in true repentance, do not ſome of you ſee that you are deſtitute of it? and, conſequently, that you are ſtill impenitent ſinners, and ready to periſh as ſuch? A dreadful conviction! But do not ſhut your eyes againſt it; for, until you ſee your error, you cannot correct it.

II. In evangelical repentance there is a deep ſenſe of the intrinſic evil of ſin, and a hearty ſorrow for it as done againſt God.

Many that think they repent of ſin have no proper ſorrow upon the account of ſin againſt God, but only on account of the puniſhment it is like to bring upon themſelves. It is not ſin they hate, but hell. Were it poſſible for them to enjoy their ſins, and yet be happy, they would never think of repenting; and hence repentance is really an hardſhip in their view. Need I tell you that ſuch a ſervile, forced repentance, is good for nothing. If the criminal is very ſorry, not becauſe he has offended, but becauſe he is to be executed for it,

it, would you call him a true penitent? If your ſlave cries and trembles, not from a ſenſe of his offence againſt you, but for fear of the laſh, do you think he truly repents of it? No; it is ſelf-love, and not the love of duty; it is fear of the puniſhment, and not hatred of the crime, that is the principle of this ſervile, ungenerous repentance.

Hence you may ſee you may be very ſorry for your ſin, becauſe it may fix a ſcandal upon your character, becauſe it may have injured your temporal eſtate, or becauſe it may ruin you in the eternal world: I ſay, you may be very ſorry for ſin on ſuch ſervile reaſons as theſe, and yet know nothing of true repentance. True repentance is a more kindly, generous thing; it proceeds from an affecting ſenſe of the baſeneſs and malignity of ſin in itſelf. Sin appears to the true penitent, as ſome ſorts of poiſon to us; that is, not only hateful becauſe it is deadly and deſtructive, but hateful and nauſeous in itſelf. I do not mean that the fear of puniſhment is no ingredient in true repentance: the love of God and ſelf-love are very conſiſtent, if the latter is kept in a due ſubordination to the former; and therefore the fear of puniſhment has great weight even with the evangelical penitent. But I mean the fear of puniſhment is not the principal, much leſs the only ſpring and motive of true repentance: the true penitent hates ſin, even when he is not thinking of heaven or hell, but only viewing it in its own nature. Though it were allowed him to go to heaven in the ways of ſin, he would by no means chuſe it. Heaven itſelf would be the leſs acceptable to him, if it were the end of ſuch a courſe.

He is alſo deeply ſorry for ſin, as againſt God, or as contrary to him. As rebellion againſt his authority, as a contrariety to his holineſs, as an oppoſition to his will and pleaſure, as a moſt baſe, ungrateful return for all his goodneſs, and as the cauſe of all the agonies of the bleſſed Jeſus; he hates it, he mourns over it with ingenuous and kindly relentings of heart. It was

ſin

ſin in this view, as againſt God, that lay heavieſt upon David's heart. He ſeems to have forgotten the injury he had done to Uriah and his wife, while all his attention was engroſſed by the horror of his crime, as againſt God. *Againſt thee, thee only have I ſinned, and done this evil in thy ſight.* Pſalm li. 4. It was this view of ſin that armed Joſeph, in the heat of youth, with power to reſiſt the ſolicitations of his miſtreſs. *How ſhall I do this great wickedneſs, and ſin againſt God?* Gen. xxxix. 9. O! the thought of ſinning againſt God, againſt ſo glorious, ſo gracious and excellent a Being, pierced him to the heart, and he could not bear it. Thus it is with every true penitent. It wounds him to the heart to think that he ſhould treat ſo good and holy a God ſo baſely. This thought would break his heart, even though ſin ſhould be attended with no danger to himſelf; and it does in fact grieve him, and melt down his ſoul into generous ſorrows, even when he has not one thought of his own danger.

Nay, of ſo generous a nature is evangelical repentance, that the penitent ſoul never melts ſo freely, nor burſts out into ſuch a flood of ingenuous ſorrows, as when it has reaſon to hope that a gracious God has freely forgiven it. Then it ſees the baſe ingratitude and complicated vileneſs of ſin, as committed againſt ſo gracious a God. God's forgiving the penitent is a reaſon to him why he ſhould never forgive himſelf. If God had concealed the glory of his grace, and rendered himſelf leſs lovely, he would be leſs ſenſible of the evil of ſinning againſt him, and leſs ſorry for it. But O! that he ſhould ſin againſt a God who is ſo gracious as to forgive him after all! This thought cuts him to the heart. Hence the evidences of pardon, and the hope of ſalvation, do not put an end to true repentance, but, on the other hand, promote it. This bleſſed hope indeed abates the terrors of a ſlave, and mixes many ſweets in the bitter cup of repentance; but it is ſo far from putting a ſtop to the flow of generous, filial ſorrows, that it opens new ſprings for

for them, and cauſes them to guſh out in larger ſtreams!

How different is this from the general temper of the world! If they repent, it is while hell ſtands open before them, and the load of guilt oppreſſes them. But could they believe that God has forgiven their ſin, and that they ſhall notwithſtanding be ſaved, they would be very eaſy about it; nay, they would moſt ungenerouſly, from this very conſideration, take encouragement to ſin the more boldly! This is more than the ſecret ſentiment, it is the avowed profeſſion of multitudes. Aſk them how they can go on impenitent in ſin, and be eaſy in ſuch a courſe? their anſwer is, *God is merciful; and they hope he will forgive and ſave them after all.* What is this but an explicit purpoſe to ſin againſt God, becauſe he is good? and to abuſe his mercy, if he will be merciful? Nothing but the laſh can keep ſuch ſordid, ſlaviſh ſouls in awe. Their hearts are dead to gratitude and every generous paſſion. If God will have them to repent, he muſt give them no hope of pardon and happineſs; for, as this hope riſes, their repentance ceaſes, and ſin appears a harmleſs inoffenſive thing. But how different is this from the generous temper of the true penitent! It wounds him more to offend a ſin-pardoning than a ſin-puniſhing God. And never does his heart melt ſo kindly, as when under the warm beams of divine love; never does he repent ſo heartily as with a pardon in his hand, and with the proſpect of heaven open before him. Do not think this is an exceſſive refinement of repentance, for common ſenſe may tell you, that God will never accept of that repentance which has the puniſhment and not the crime for its object: and this generous temper is aſſigned to the true penitent in the ſacred ſcriptures. See Ezek. xvi. 63. After God has promiſed many bleſſings to the Jews, this is mentioned as the conſequence, *Thou ſhalt remember and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more, becauſe of thy ſhame, when I am pacified towards thee for all that thou*

thou haſt done, ſaith the Lord God. So (Ezek. xxxvi. 31.) after many promiſes of rich bleſſings, it is ſaid, *Then ſhall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and ſhall lothe yourſelves in your own ſight, for your iniquities and your abominations.* You ſee this ſhame and confuſion, this penitential remembrance and ſelf-lothing, are the effect of God's being reconciled. When he is pacified, then they are aſhamed, confounded, and lothe themſelves.

Brethren, does your repentance ſtand this teſt? Examine and ſee; for if it does not, it is only a repentance to be repented of.

III. True repentance extends to all known ſin, without exception.

If ſin, conſidered in itſelf, or ſin as done againſt God, be the object of true repentance, then it follows, that whatever is ſin in itſelf, or againſt God, muſt be the object of it. Every ſin, whether it conſiſts in neglecting what is commanded, or doing what is forbidden; whether it be immediately againſt God, againſt our neighbour, or ourſelves; whether it be faſhionable, conſtitutional, pleaſing, or painful; every ſin, without exception, as far as it is known, is hated and lamented by the true penitent. He ſhould indeed regard them according to their different degrees of aggravation; but he ſhould not except any of them, even the ſmalleſt. They are all forbidden by the ſame divine authority; all contrary to the holy nature of God; all oppoſite to the obligations of duty and gratitude we are under to him; and, therefore, they muſt be all repented of. This was the character of David, *That he hated every falſe way.* Pſalm cxix. 128.

Now, does not this conſideration prove ſome of you impenitent ſinners? Do you not except ſome ſins out of your repentance, and plead for an indulgence to them? If ſo, you may be ſure your hearts are not right with God.

IV. True repentance always includes reformation. There are many whoſe whole life ſeems to be one

continued

continued ſtruggle between the ſtrength of ſin and conſcience; and they run round in a circle of ſinning and repenting, repenting and ſinning, all their days. Sin is ſo ſtrong that it will prevail, in ſpite of all the ſtruggles of conſcience; and conſcience remains ſo vigorous, that it ſtill continues to ſtruggle, though without ſucceſs. They commit ſin, then are ſorry for it; then commit it again: and in this viciſſitude they ſpend their lives. Nay, the repentance of ſome is ſo far from reforming them from ſin, that it rather encourages them to return to it; for now, they think, they have cleared off the old ſcore, and they may venture upon a new one; till that alſo ſwells very high, and then they have another fit of repentance to clear off this new account.

Alas! brethren, is this repentance unto life? What does that ſorrow for ſin avail, which leaves the heart as much in love with it as ever? The only reaſon why ſorrow is a neceſſary ingredient in repentance, is, becauſe we will not, we cannot forſake ſin, till it be made bitter to us; and, therefore, when our ſorrow has not this effect, it is altogether uſeleſs. Can that repentance ſave you, which is ſo far from being an ingredient of holineſs, that it is a preparative to ſin? A repentance that anſwers no other end but to make conſcience eaſy after a debauch, and prepare it for another ſurfeit!

Is this the nature of true repentance? No; it is the character of every true penitent, that ſin has not an habitual dominion over him. Rom. vi. 14. Remember that maxim of the wiſe man, *He that covereth his ſins ſhall not proſper; but whoſo confeſſeth and forſaketh them, ſhall have mercy.* Prov. xxviii. 13. Obſerve, not only confeſſing, but alſo forſaking them, is neceſſary to the obtaining of mercy. The ſame thing appears from the various expreſſions uſed in ſcripture to deſcribe repentance. To repent, in the language of the Bible, is to depart from our evil ways; to ceaſe to do evil, and learn to do well; to cleanſe our hands, and purify our hearts: which expreſſions ſignify not only ſorrow

ſorrow for ſin, but eſpecially reformation from it. In vain, therefore, do you pretend you repent, if you ſtill go on in the ſins you repent of. If you indulge yourſelves in any one known ſin, however ſmall you may think it, you are utter ſtrangers to true repentance. I do not mean by this, that true penitents are perfectly free from ſin in this life: alas! their painful experience makes the beſt of them ſenſible of the contrary. But I mean two things, which deſerve your notice; the one is, that every true penitent has an habitual dominion over ſin: the principles of religion and virtue are prevailingly uppermoſt in his ſoul, and habitually regulate his behaviour. As for groſs, overt acts of ſin, he is habitually free from them, and, indeed, generally this is no great difficulty. To him it is no ſuch mighty exploit to abſtain from drunkenneſs, ſwearing, injuſtice, or the like. And as to his daily infirmities, they are contrary to the habitual prevailing bent of his ſoul, and the matter of his daily lamentation. And this introduces the other remark I had in view; which is this, that it does not appear a kind of privilege to the true penitent that he cannot be perfect in this life; but it is the daily grief and burden of his ſoul that he is not. Many ſeem well pleaſed, that this is an imperfect ſtate, becauſe, they think it furniſhes them with a plea or an excuſe for their neglect of the ſervice of God, and for their ſinful indulgences. In ſhort, ſin is their delight, and, therefore, freedom from it would be a painful bereavement to them; and they are glad they are in ſuch a ſtate as will admit of their retaining it. Now ſuch perſons, as I obſerved, do really eſteem it a privilege to be imperfect, and they rejoice in it as their happineſs, that they are able to ſin: but it is quite the reverſe with the true penitent. Perfection in holineſs, and an entire freedom from ſin, is the object of his eager deſire and moſt vigorous purſuit; and he can never be eaſy until he enjoys it. If he cannot enjoy the pleaſure of ſerving God as he would in the preſent ſtate, he muſt, at leaſt, enjoy the pleaſure of grieving

ing over, and lamenting his guilty imperfections. If he cannot get free from ſin, his old enemy, he will, at leaſt, take a kind of pleaſing revenge upon it, by hating and reſiſting it, and lothing it and himſelf, upon the account of it. In ſhort, the remains of ſin, all things conſidered, and taking one time with another, afford him more uneaſineſs, perplexity and ſorrow, than all other things in the world. O! if he were but delivered from this body of death he would be happy, however oppreſſed with other burdens; but while this lies upon him, all the world cannot render him eaſy and happy.

From the whole, you ſee that reformation is an eſſential ingredient of true repentance; and in vain do you pretend that you repent of ſin, if you ſtill indulge yourſelves in it. You may try to excuſe yourſelves from the frailty of your nature, the imperfection of the preſent ſtate, or the ſtrength of temptation; but in ſpite of all your excuſes, this is an eternal truth, that, unleſs your repentance reforms you, and turns you from the outward practice or ſecret indulgence of thoſe ſins you are ſorry for, it is not repentance unto life.

V. and laſtly. Evangelical repentance implies a believing application to God for pardon only through Jeſus Chriſt.

Evangelical repentance does not conſiſt in deſpairing agonies and hopeleſs horrors of conſcience, but is attended with an humble hope of forgiveneſs and acceptance; and this hope is founded entirely upon the merits of Jeſus, and not of our repentance and reformation. *

How oppoſite to this is the prevailing ſpirit of the world! If they repent, it is to make amends for their ſins, and procure the divine favour by their repentance: and thus, even their repentance becomes a ſnare to them, and one cauſe of their deſtruction. In this ſenſe, a bold ſaying of one of the Fathers may be true:

* See the foregoing Sermon.

" That more ſouls are deſtroyed by their repentance than by their ſin ;" that is, ſin is evidently evil, and they are in no danger of truſting in it to recommend them to God. But even their ſuperficial, ſervile repentance has the appearance of goodneſs, and therefore they make a righteouſneſs of it ; and upon this quick-ſand they build their hopes, until they ſink into remedileſs ruin.

Thus I have endeavoured to open to you the great goſpel-duty of repentance, as diſtinguiſhed from all counterfeits and deluſive appearances. I hope you have all underſtood me ; for I have laboured to make myſelf underſtood, and ſpoke as plainly as I could. If you have experienced ſuch a generous, evangelical repentance as has been deſcribed, you may venture your ſouls upon it, that it is repentance unto life ; but if you are ſtrangers to it, I may leave it to yourſelves to determine, whether you can be ſaved in your preſent condition.

I have only two or three remarks more to make for the farther illuſtration of this ſubject. The firſt is, that all the principles of degenerate nature can never produce this generous and thorough repentance, but that it is the peculiar work of the Holy Spirit. Self-love, and the other low and ſlaviſh principles of nature, may produce a ſervile, mercenary repentance, proceeding from the fears of puniſhment ; but only the love of God, and the noble principles of the new nature, can bring you to a kindly, ingenuous repentance, from noble motives ; and it is the Holy Spirit alone that can ſhed abroad the love of God in your hearts, and implant theſe generous principles of the new nature.—The ſecond remark is, that this generous, ſupernatural repentance, is not the firſt repentance of an awakened ſinner. No ; he is firſt alarmed with terror and dreadful apprehenſions of puniſhment ; and all the ſprings of nature are put in motion before theſe nobler principles are infuſed, and he is brought to a genuine, evangelical repentance.—Therefore, thirdly,

The

The only way to attain to this ſupernatural repentance is, to uſe all proper means to excite the ſprings of natural repentance, particularly, to reflect upon your ſins, upon their number and aggravation, and your dreadful danger. While you are deſtitute of the love of God, let ſelf-love excite you to be ſorry for your ſins. While you cannot ſee the intrinſic evil of ſin as againſt God, ſee at leaſt the inſupportable miſery it is like to bring upon you. If you have not ſuch generous ſouls as to mourn over ſin as againſt a ſin-forgiving God, at leaſt mourn over it as againſt a ſin-puniſhing God. And while the principles of nature are thus exerted, who knows but God may work in you diviner principles, and give you repentance unto life!

My ſubject is now ripe for an application; and this ſhall be nothing elſe but a ſhort illuſtration of the other parts of my text.

Let me then, in the firſt place, publiſh the royal edict of the King of Heaven in this aſſembly: *God commandeth all men to repent;* he commands you in various ways; commands you with the motions of his Spirit ſtriving with you, and by the voice of your own conſciences, which is the voice of God! commands you by his providence, which tends to lead you to repentance, and eſpecially by his goſpel, which he has ſent to you for this end. He now commands you by my mouth; for while I ſpeak what his word authoriſes, it does not loſe its efficacy, nor ceaſe to be his word by paſſing through my lips. Remember, he commands you, he lays his authority upon you, to repent. You are not left to your diſcretion in the caſe. Dare you reject the known, expreſs command of the divine Majeſty? Should a voice now break from the excellent glory, directed to each of you by name, ſaying, *Repent! repent!* would it not ſtartle you? would it not ſhock you, to ſet yourſelves in oppoſition to ſo expreſs and immediate a command of the God that made you? Well, his command to you in the goſpel is as real, as authoritative and binding, as an immediate voice from heaven.

heaven. And dare you diſobey it? Dare you go home this day with this additional guilt upon you, of diſobeying a known command of the ſupreme Lord of heaven and earth? Dare you provoke him to jealouſy? Are you ſtronger than he? Can you harden yourſelves againſt him, and yet proſper? I again proclaim it aloud in your hearing, The King of kings, my Maſter, has iſſued out his royal mandate, requiring you, by theſe preſents, to repent, upon pain of everlaſting damnation. This day it is proclaimed in your ears, therefore, this day repent. If you refuſe to repent, let this conviction follow you home, and perpetually haunt you, that you have this day, when you were met together under pretence of worſhipping God, knowingly diſobeyed the great goſpel-command. And to the great God you muſt anſwer for your diſobedience.

In the next place, my text tells you, he commands all men to repent: all men, of all ranks and characters. This command, therefore, is binding upon you all. The great God cries to you all, *Repent!* Repent, young and old, rich and poor, white and black, free and bond:—Repent, ye young ſinners, now, while your hearts are ſoft and tender, and your paſſions eaſily moved, and you are not hardened by a long courſe of habitual ſinning:—Repent, ye grey-headed veteran ſinners, now at laſt repent, when the load of ſins, heaped up for ſo many years, lies ſo heavy upon you, and you are walking every moment on the ſlippery brink of eternity:—Repent, ye rich men; ye are not above this command:—Repent, ye poor; ye are not beneath it:—Repent, ye poor ſlaves; your colour, or low ſtate in life, cannot free you from this command:—Repent, ye maſters, for your ſins againſt your Maſter, who is in heaven. In ſhort, God commandeth all men, kings and ſubjects, the higheſt and the loweſt, and all the intermediate ranks, to repent.

To render the call ſtill more pointed and univerſal, it is added, *He commandeth all men, every where, to repent.* Every where, in city and country; in palaces and

and cottages; in Europe, Aſia, Africa and America, wherever the trumpet of the goſpel ſounds the alarm to repent; in Virginia, in this very ſpot, where we now ſtand. Here the command of God finds you out, and calls you to repent. Repentance is not a local duty, but it extends as far as human nature, as far as the utmoſt boundaries of this guilty world. Wherever there are ſinners under a diſpenſation of grace, there this command reaches. It reaches to the buſy merchant in his ſtore, to the laborious planter in the field, and to the tradeſman in his ſhop; to the ſailor toſſing on the waves, and to the inhabitant of ſolid ground; to the man of learning in his ſtudy, and to the illiterate peaſant; to the judge upon the bench, as well as to the criminal in the dungeon; to the man of ſobriety, to the unthinking rake, and to the brutiſh debauchee; to the miniſter in the pulpit, and to the people in their pews; to the diſſenter in the meeting-houſe, and to the conformiſt in church; to huſbands and wives; to parents and children; to maſters and ſervants; to all the ſons of men, whatever they are, wherever they dwell, whatever they are doing; to all theſe the command reaches. And do you not find yourſelves included in it? If you are men, if you dwell any where upon this guilty globe, you are included; for let me tell you once more, God commandeth all men, every where, to repent.

Nor are you allowed to delay your compliance. Repentance is your preſent duty: For *now he commandeth all men, every where, to repent:* Now, when the times of ignorance are over, and the goſpel ſheds heavenly day among you: Now, when he will no longer wink, or connive at your impenitence, but takes ſtrict notice of it with juſt indignation: Now, while the day of grace laſts, and there is place left for repentance: Now, before you are hardened through the deceitfulneſs of ſin, and while his ſpirit is ſtriving with you: Now, while his judgments are in the earth, and your country is ſurrounded with the terrors of war: Now,

Now, while he is publiſhing his command to a guilty country to repent, by the horrid ſound of trumpets and cannon: * Now, while you have time, which may be taken from you the next year, the next week, or perhaps, the very next moment: Now, while you enjoy health of body, and the exerciſe of your reaſon; and your attention is not tied down to pain and agony: Now, and not to-morrow; not upon a ſick bed; not in a dying hour: Now is the time, in which God commands you to repent: he does not allow you one hour's delay; and what right have you to allow it to yourſelves? Therefore, now, this moment, let us all repent; all, without exception. Why ſhould there not be one aſſembly of true penitents upon our guilty globe? And, O! why ſhould it not be this? Why ſhould not repentance be as univerſal as ſin? And, ſince we are all ſinners, O! why ſhould we not all be humble penitents? Repent you muſt, either in time or eternity, upon earth, or in hell. You cannot poſſibly avoid it. The queſtion is not, *Shall I repent?* for that is beyond a doubt. But the queſtion is, "Shall I repent now, when it may reform and ſave me? or ſhall I put it off to the eternal world, when my repentance will be my puniſhment, and can anſwer no end but to torment me?" And is this a hard queſtion! Does not common ſenſe determine it in favour of the preſent time? Therefore, let the duty be as extenſively obſerved as it is commanded: Let all men every where repent. Bleſſed God! pour out upon us a ſpirit of grace and ſupplication, that there may be a great mourning among us, that each of us may mourn apart, and our wives apart; that we may *mourn, as one that mourneth for an only ſon; and be in bitterneſs, as one that is in bitterneſs for a firſt born.* Zech. xii. 10. Grant this, for Jeſus's ſake! Amen.

SERMON

* This Sermon is dated New-Kent, May 22, 1757.

SERMON XLV.

THE TENDER *ANXIETIES* OF *MINISTERS* FOR THEIR *PEOPLE.*

GALAT. iv. 19, 20. *My little children, of whom I travail in birth again, until Chriſt be formed in you, I deſire to be preſent with you now, and to change my voice; for I ſtand in doubt of you.*

NOTHING could be more agreeable to a generous ſpirit that loves God and mankind, than to be fully ſatisfied of the real goodneſs and happineſs of his fellow-creatures; and nothing is more painful than an anxious jealouſy and fear in a matter he has ſo much at heart. Some profeſs themſelves very eaſy in this reſpect, and they glory in this eaſineſs as a high pitch of charity and benevolence. They hope well of all—except, perhaps, their perſonal enemies, who, for that very reaſon, muſt be very worthleſs and execrable creatures. Though ſcripture and reaſon do jointly declare, that men of bad lives, who habitually indulge themſelves in ſin, and neglect the known duties of religion and morality, are no objects of rational charity at all, but muſt be judged deſtitute of true piety by all that would judge according to evidence; "yet, God forbid, ſay they, that they ſhould judge any man. They are not of a cenſorious ſpirit, but generous and benevolent in their hopes of all." They can venture to hope that the tree is good, even when the fruit is corrupt; that is, that a good man may lead a bad life. But this temper ought not to be honoured with the noble name of Charity. Let it be called ignorance, groſs ignorance of the nature of true religion; or infi-

delity

delity and avowed diſbelief of what the ſcripture determines concerning the character of a good man; or let it be called indifferency, an indifferency whether men be now good or bad, and whether they ſhall be happy or miſerable hereafter. Where there is no love or affectionate concern, there will be no uneaſy jealouſy. Or let it be called a mere artifice for ſelf-defence. Men are often cautious of condemning others, not from benevolence to them, but out of mercy to themſelves, not being willing to involve themſelves in the ſame condemnation; ſince they are conſcious they are as bad as others, they muſt be ſparing to others, in order to ſpare themſelves. Theſe are the true names of what paſſes current under the name of Charity in the world.

St. Paul, whoſe heart was capable of the kindeſt ſentiments to mankind, could not enjoy the pleaſure of this promiſcuous charity. He could not thus conclude well of all, not even of all under the chriſtian name; not of all whom he once hoped were his ſpiritual children; no, not of all the members of the once flouriſhing churches of Galatia, where he met with ſo friendly a reception, and had ſo much promiſing appearance of ſucceſs. *I ſtand in doubt of you*, ſays he.

The ſtate and character of theſe churches, we may partly learn from this epiſtle. A conſiderable number of Galatians had been converted from heatheniſm to chriſtianity by St. Paul's miniſtry; and in the tranſports of their firſt zeal they made a very promiſing appearance: hence he puts them in mind that they had begun in the ſpirit (ch. iii. 3.) that when they firſt ſtarted in the chriſtian race, they had run well (ch. v. 7.) that they had ſuffered many things in the cauſe of the goſpel; (ch. iii. 4.) and as to their affection to him, it was very extraordinary. *Ye received me*, ſays he, *as an angel of God, even as Jeſus Chriſt.—I bear you record, that if it had been poſſible, you would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me.* (ch. iv. 14, 15.) But alas! how naturally do the moſt flouriſhing churches

churches tend to decay! How frail and fickle is man! How inconſtant popular applauſe! Theſe promiſing churches of Galatia ſoon began to decline; and their favourite, St. Paul, their apoſtle and ſpiritual father, appeared in quite another light, appeared as their enemy, becauſe he told them the truth. There was a ſpurious ſet of preachers in that age, who corrupted the pure goſpel of Chriſt with Jewiſh mixtures. The ceremonies of the law of Moſes, and the traditions of their elders, they held as of perpetual and univerſal obligation; and as ſuch they impoſed them even upon the chriſtian converts from among the Gentiles, who never had any thing to do with them. Had they been recommended to their obſervance as indifferences or prudentials, it would not have had ſuch bad influence upon chriſtianity. But they continued to impoſe them as abſolutely neceſſary to ſalvation, and repreſented the righteouſneſs revealed in the goſpel as inſufficient without theſe additions. Thus they laboured to corrupt the great doctrine of a ſinner's juſtification by faith alone, through the righteouſneſs of Jeſus Chriſt, that grand article upon which the church ſtands or falls, according to an old obſervation of Luther. Theſe judaizing teachers had artfully inſinuated themſelves into the Galatian churches, and ſpread the poiſon of their legal doctrines. This ſunk St. Paul in the eſteem of his converts, and they exchanged his pure goſpel for another, more adapted to their taſte. In conſequence of this, religion was declining faſt among them; and St. Paul is alarmed leſt he ſhould have beſtowed labour in vain upon them.

This epiſtle is an affectionate attempt to recover them. It is for the moſt part argumentative; for its author was not fond of moving their paſſions without enlightening their underſtandings. But ſometimes he melts into the moſt pathetic ſtrains, and gives the moſt affecting touches to the heart. Such a tender, paſſionate addreſs is this in my text. *My little children, of whom I travail in birth again, till Chriſt be formed in you, I de-*

ſire to be preſent with you now, and to change my voice; for I ſtand in doubt of you. What a tender, moving, paternal addreſs is this!

My little children—This is a fond affectionate appellation; the language of a tender father. It ſtrongly expreſſes his paternal love and ſolicitude for the Galatians. The ſame ſtyle he uſes to the Theſſalonians—*You know, how we exhorted and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father doth his children*, 1 Theſſ. ii. 11. He may alſo call them his children, to imitate that he had begotten them by the goſpel as ſpiritual children to God: or rather, as the following words ſuggeſt, he alludes to the ſickneſs and anxiety of a mother in conception, and the pangs and agonies of child-bearing; and by theſe he illuſtrates the pangs and agonies of zeal, and the affectionate ſolicitude he had felt for them while Chriſt was forming in them under his miniſtry, and they were in the critical hour of the new-birth. He might well call them his children, becauſe he had ſuffered all the pains of a mother for them. He adds the epithet little, *my little children*, becauſe the fond language of a parent affects ſuch diminutives, or perhaps to intimate their ſmall progreſs in chriſtianity. They were but little children in grace ſtill.

My little children, of whom I travail in birth again—I have juſt obſerved, this is an alluſion to the painful diſorders and pangs of conception and birth; * by which the apoſtle ſtrongly repreſents the agonies of affectionate zeal, and tender anxieties he felt for the Galatians. But what rendered them doubly painful to him, was, that he was obliged to feel them more than once—*I travail of you in birth again.* He had cheerful hopes that Chriſt was indeed formed in them, and that they were born from above, and conſequently that he ſhould have no more occaſion to feel thoſe agonies and throes he had ſuffered for them. But alas! he had

* Critics obſerve, that the word ὠδίνω is expreſſive of the ſickneſs of conception, as well as the pangs of birth.

had now reaſon to fear the contrary, and, therefore, he muſt again feel the ſame pangs and agonies: he muſt *travail in birth again*,

Until Chriſt be formed in you;—that is, until they are made new creatures after the image of Chriſt; until the ſacred fœtus be formed in their hearts; until the heavenly embryo grow and ripen for birth, or until they be conformed to Jeſus Chriſt in heart and practice; till then he can never be eaſy. Though they ſhould retain the chriſtian name, though they ſhould make great proficiency in other attainments, though they ſhould become as much attached to him as ever, yet he muſt ſtill feel the pangs of birth for them, till Chriſt be really formed in them.

I deſire to be preſent with you now—In his abſence they had been corrupted by the judaizing teachers; and he hoped his preſence might have ſome happy influence to recover them. He was impatient of the reſtraints of a literary correſpondence, and longed to pour out all his heart to them in a free addreſs.

I deſire to be preſent with you now, and to change my voice—When he left them, they were in a flouriſhing ſtate, and therefore he took his leave of them in the warmeſt language of affection, approbation and confidence. *But now*, ſays he, *I wiſh to be preſent with you*, that I may alter my addreſs; that I may change my voice into more ſevere and alarming ſtrains; and inſtead of congratulating you upon your happy ſtate, warn you of your danger." Or his meaning may be, "I find myſelf obliged to uſe ſevere language with you in this epiſtle, which is by no means agreeable to me. I therefore deſire to be preſent with you, that I may in perſon uſe means for your recovery, that thereupon I may change my voice, and ſpeak to you in a ſoft, approving ſtrain, which is always moſt pleaſing to me, as it would be to you. It is quite contrary to my inclination to uſe ſuch chiding language to my dear little children." Or perhaps he may mean, "I deſire to be preſent with you, that I may know the different characters

characters of your members, and that I may be able to change my voice, and addreſs them accordingly; that I may warn, admoniſh, exhort, or comfort you, as your reſpective caſes may require. I would willingly ſpeak comfortably to you all promiſcuouſly, but this I cannot now do."

For I ſtand in doubt of you—When I parted with you laſt I had great confidence in you, and hoped that you would perſevere; but now I ſtand in doubt of you, and therefore muſt alter my voice to you if I were preſent with you. While I am thus doubtful of you, I cannot ſpeak comfortably to you all promiſcuouſly; but I muſt honeſtly tell you my ſuſpicions of you, and, until there appear a change in you, I cannot change my voice into more pleaſing ſtrains.

My dear hearers, the charge is intruſted to me by the great Shepherd, for which I muſt give an account: you and I are too nearly concerned in this text to conſider it merely as a piece of hiſtory, referring only to St. Paul and the Galatians 1700 years ago: I muſt bring it nearer home in a particular application. God forbid ſo vain and proud a thought ſhould ever find place in my heart, as to ſet myſelf upon the footing of equality with St. Paul, the chief of the apoſtles. I will not tell you how much and how often I have been mortified, eſpecially of late, at the thoughts of my vaſt inferiority, not only to him, but to the ordinary miniſters of Chriſt of a lower claſs. You ſeldom hear a ſermon from me but what fills me with ſhame and confuſion in the review; and I almoſt ceaſe to wonder that the goſpel has ſo little ſucceſs among you, while managed by ſo unſkilful a hand. Yet I hope I may truly profeſs ſo much ſincere affection and concern for you, as to warrant me to borrow the words of the apoſtle, though in a much lower ſenſe: *My little children, of whom I travail in birth, till Chriſt be formed in you, I deſire to be preſent with you, and to change my voice*, according to the variety of your caſes; *for I am in doubt of ſome of you.* And I hope you are diſpoſed to give me a ſerious

ſerious hearing, and a ſerious hearing is juſtly expected from you; for, remember, the day of death and the day of judgment will come, and that you muſt die, you muſt be judged, you muſt be doomed to your everlaſting ſtate.

I ſtand in doubt of ſome of you. I am jealous over you with a godly jealouſy. And if there be no ground for it, you will forgive me; for if it be an error, it is the error of love. Though I was an entire ſtranger to you all I might juſtly harbour this jealouſy of ſome of you, upon this general principle, that there never yet was ſo pure a church met in one place, as not to have one inſincere, hopocritical profeſſor in it. Even the apoſtles, the moſt ſelect ſociety that ever was formed, had a Judas among them. And can we expect more than apoſtolic purity in ſuch a large promiſcuous crowd as generally frequents this houſe? In every church there are, alas! ſome ſuſpicious characters; and my preſent deſign is to deſcribe ſuch characters, and then leave it to yourſelves to judge whether there be not ſuch among you.

Forgive me, if I ſuppoſe ſome of you live in the greateſt neglect of family-religion. You lie down and riſe up, perhaps, for weeks, months and years, and yet never call your families together morning and evening to worſhip the great God who has placed you in families. If this be the character of any of you, then I muſt plainly tell you, I ſtand in doubt of you. I really doubt you have no reliſh for the worſhip of God; for if you had, how could you, as it were, excommunicate yourſelves from the precious privilege of drawing near to God with your dear families, and devoting yourſelves and them to him? I really doubt you have no deep affecting concern for the ſalvation of your domeſtics, nor conſequently for your own, otherwiſe how could you neglect a duty that has ſo direct, a natural tendency to make religious impreſſions upon their minds? Can any thing more naturally tend to make them ſenſible of their obligations, their ſins, their wants and mercies, than to hear you ſolemnly mention

mention theſe things every day, in the preſence of the great God? Your character in this is oppoſite to that of good men in all ages. You will find in the hiſtory of the patriarchs, particularly of Abraham, Iſaac and Jacob, That wherever they had a dwelling for themſelves, they had an altar for God. You find David returning from the ſolemnities of public worſhip to bleſs his houſe, 2 Sam. vi. 20. and ſaying, *Evening, morning, and at noon, will I pray.* Pſalm lv. 17. You find Daniel praying, as he was wont, three times a day, even when the penalty was not only the loſs of his place at court, but his being thrown as a prey to hungry lions. You find St. Paul ſaluting ſome of the primitive chriſtians, *with the church that was in their houſe.* Rom. xvi. 5. 1 Cor. xvi. 19. Coloſſ. iv. 15. Philemon 2. which is a ſtrong intimation that they made their families little churches by celebrating the worſhip of God in them; for a church, without the worſhip of God, would be an abſurd ſociety indeed. I had almoſt forgotten the example of Joſhua, who bravely reſolved, *That whatever others ſhould do, he and his houſe would ſerve the Lord.* Joſhua xxiv. 15. You ſee then, your character in this important inſtance is oppoſite to that of the ſaints in all ages. And have I not reaſon to ſtand in doubt of you, eſpecially as you cannot now plead ignorance; ſince you have been ſo often inſtructed in your duty on this head? You may plead your incapacity or hurry of buſineſs, or that your neighbours would point at you as oſtentatious Phariſees. But this is ſo far from clearing you, that it renders you ſtill more ſuſpicious. If theſe be the reaſons of your neglect, I greatly doubt you love your reputation and the world more than the honour of God, more than his ſervice, and more than the immortal intereſt of your children and ſervants. How would it ſhock you if God ſhould authoritatively lay that reſtraint upon you which you voluntarily put upon yourſelves? Suppoſe he ſhould ſay, "I will allow all the families around you to worſhip me every day, but

I lay your family under an interdict; from them I will receive no worſhip:" how would this ſhock you? And will you of your own accord take this curſe upon yourſelves? O! think of it, and this very evening conſecrate your houſes to God.

Again, I will ſuppoſe ſome of you generally obſerve the outward duties of religion: you pray in ſecret and in your families; you attend upon public worſhip; you receive the ſacraments, and you ſometimes faſt: but generally this is but a dull round of lifeleſs formalities. Even a judicious chriſtian may ſuſpect that your whole hearts are not engaged, that the vigour of your ſpirits is not exerted, and that there is no ſpiritual life in your devotions. This man may ſuſpect; and He who ſearches the heart may ſee it is ſo in fact. Now if this be your character, I muſt tell you, *I ſtand in doubt of you.* If you are really luke-warm Laodiceans, the caſe is quite plain: it is not a matter of doubt but of ſure belief, that you are the moſt odious creatures upon earth to Jeſus Chriſt. He could wiſh you were cold or hot, or any thing rather than what you are. And where the appearances of ſuch formality are found, where there is a dull uniformity in all your devotions, without any ſigns of thoſe divine changes which the gracious preſence of God produces, your caſe looks very ſuſpicious, even to men. I really ſtand in doubt of you; and you have great need to look to yourſelves, leſt the ſuſpicion ſhould be well grounded.

Some of you perhaps think you can eaſily clear yourſelves from the ſuſpicion of formality, for you have often had your hearts melted, your paſſions raiſed, and you find a great change in your diſpoſitions in devotion: ſometimes you are cold and dull, and at other times all zeal and ecſtaſy: but notwithſtanding this, there may be great reaſon to doubt concerning ſome of you. I doubt theſe are only warm flights of the paſſions, under the influence of a heated imagination, and not ſuch rational emotions of the heart as proceed from a well-enlightened mind, that ſees the nature, importance,

portance, and excellency of divine things. I fear theſe warm paſſions have no effectual tendency to make you better; that is, to ſubdue your favourite ſins in heart and life, to make you more watchful againſt them, and to long and labour after univerſal holineſs. I am afraid they have no tendency to humble you, to degrade you in your own eyes, and make you appear mean and vile to yourſelves, but on the other hand, that they tend to ſet you off to advantage in your own view, and to make you think highly of yourſelves. I am afraid they are ſhallow and ſuperficial, and never reach deep enough to transform the ſettled temper of the whole ſoul, and give it a prevailing, habitual bent towards God. I am afraid, among your various exerciſes of heart, you have none of thoſe humbling heart-breaking ſenſations which a poor believer often feels, when lying helpleſs before God, and caſting his guilty ſoul upon Jeſus Chriſt. I am afraid your exerciſes are of a more ſelfiſh, haughty and preſumptuous kind. I am afraid of ſome of you, my dear people, in this reſpect, becauſe this has been, in fact, the caſe of multitudes, and therefore it may be yours.

I alſo ſtand in doubt of ſome of you, that you have worn off your religious impreſſions before they ripened to a right iſſue. This is a very common caſe in the world, and therefore it may be yours. I am afraid ſome of you are farther from the kingdom of God to-day, than you were ſome months or years ago. Formerly you were ſerious and thoughtful, but now you are light and vain; formerly you had ſome clear, affecting convictions of your ſin and danger, which made you penſive and uneaſy, ſet you upon the uſe of the means of grace with unuſual earneſtneſs and diligence, and made you more watchful againſt ſin and temptation. Had you but perſevered in this courſe, your caſe would have been very hopeful; nay, you might ere now have been ſincere chriſtians, happy in the favour of God, and the joyful expectation of a bleſſed immortality. But, alas! now you are become more

more thoughtleſs and ſecure, more negligent and careleſs, more worldly-minded, more bold and venturous as to temptation, and particularly enſnaring company; leſs ſenſible of your ſin and danger, leſs afraid of the divine diſpleaſure, leſs ſolicitous for a Saviour, and leſs affected with eternal things. I ſtand in doubt of you that this is the caſe of ſome of you; and if it be, it is very diſmal: *the laſt ſtate of that man is worſe than the firſt.* Perhaps your religious impreſſions went ſo far, that yourſelves and others too began to number you in the liſt of ſincere converts. But, alas! you have relapſed, and now your caſe is diſmally dark; it is very doubtful whether ever you had one ſpark of true piety. Like the Galatians, you did once run well; but the corruptions of your own hearts, the cares of the world, the influence of bad company, and the temptations of the devil have hindered you, and made you turn back, and now you are got into the eaſy, ſlippery, deſcending road of apoſtacy; from whence, as from a precipice, your feet will, ere long, ſlide, and let you fall into the fiery gulph below. You are every day running farther and farther from God and heaven, and ſo much nearer to the chambers of eternal death. Your conſciences, by repeated violences, will be ſtunned into inſenſibility, your hearts will harden more and more, like moiſtened clay in the ſun. Your corruptions are gaining the victory in repeated conflicts, will grow more ſtrong and inſolent, like veteran troops inured to war and conqueſt. In ſhort, your caſe grows every day more and more diſcouraging; and I ſtand in doubt of you, leſt you ſhould never recover your religious impreſſions, nor enter into the kingdom of God.

I am alſo in doubt of ſome of you, that the world has your hearts: your thoughts ſeem to be engroſſed by it, and your affections fixed upon it as your ſupreme good, and hence your mouth is full of it; for *out of the abundance of the heart the mouth ſpeaketh. Now if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in*

him. Covetouſneſs is idolatry; and you know that no idolater has eternal life. I fear this is the character of ſome of you.

Is there not alſo reaſon to doubt of ſome of you, from the diſcoveries you give of an unchriſtian ſpirit towards mankind? You may perhaps make a ſpecious profeſſion of religion, and punctually attend upon divine ordinances; but do you not diſcover inſufferable pride, and unchriſtian reſentment, and an unforgiving ſpirit under injuries, a diſpoſition to over-reach and take the advantage in your dealings? Such a temper, when predominant, is utterly inconſiſtent with the ſpirit of chriſtianity, and proves you entirely deſtitute of it; and the appearances of the prevalence of ſuch a temper render your caſe very ſuſpicious.

Let me add farther, * Suppoſe that in this day of blood and ſlaughter, when the Lord of Hoſts calls you to weeping, and mourning, and girding with ſackcloth; when the wounds of your bleeding country, and the ſtreams of blood that are running by ſea and land, call for your ſorrowful ſympathy; when your everlaſting ſtate ſtands in a dreadful ſuſpenſe, and you know not whether heaven or hell will be your reſidence, if you ſhould die this night; or, when the evidence lies againſt you, and you have good proof, that you are utterly unprepared for eternity in your preſent condition, when the ſpirit of God ſeems withdrawn from us; and conſequently but few are preſſing into the kingdom of God, and general languor and inefficacy run through the miniſtrations of the goſpel; when your conduct may encourage others to run into extravagancies, and forget God and their ſouls, as well as throw yourſelves cauſeleſsly into the way of temptation, and cheriſh that levity of mind which directly tends to wear off your religious impreſſions; when at a time in which you pretend to commemorate the birth of the holy Jeſus, who came to deſtroy the works of the devil and the fleſh, and particularly revellings, and to make

* This Sermon is dated Hanover, January 8, 1758.

make you ſober and watchful to prayer, and to ſhun all appearances of evil; when in your tranſition from the old year to the new, in which you may die, and never ſee the cloſe of it; and when one would think it would better become you ſolemnly to recollect how you have ſpent the year paſt, and devote yourſelves to God for the future with new vows and reſolutions;—Suppoſe, I ſay, that at ſuch a time, and in ſuch circumſtances, you indulge yourſelves in feaſting and carouſing, that perhaps you proſecute and chace the diverſion from houſe to houſe, in order to prolong it, and guard againſt the returns of ſerious, retired and thoughtful hours; as if laughing, dancing and frolic, were proper expreſſions of gratitude for the birth of a Saviour, and as if there was nothing in time or eternity of ſufficient moment to make you ſerious, and check your growing levity—What ſhall I ſay of ſuch a practice? The mildeſt thing I can ſay is, that I ſtand in doubt of you, who promote or willingly tolerate, or join in ſuch entertainments. I have no buſineſs at preſent to determine, whether muſic, dancing and feaſting be lawful in themſelves. Granting them to be as lawful as you could wiſh, I am ſure that, at ſuch a time and in the circumſtances that generally attend them, they are utterly unlawful to every chriſtian, and have a natural tendency to baniſh all ſerious religion from among us. You are but little acquainted with me if you think I ſay this as a ſour aſcetic, or an enemy to the lawful pleaſures of mankind, or that I place religion in moroſe, mopiſh, melancholy auſterities. Such of you as are acquainted with me muſt know the contrary. But after all I muſt declare, I ſhall have very little hopes of the ſucceſs of the goſpel among you, if once I ſhould have a congregation of dancing, frolicking chriſtians. Alas! they are not like to dance and frolic themſelves into heaven.—It is with great reluctance I touch upon ſuch a ſubject, though with a gentle hand; but duty commands, and I muſt obey: and I wiſh the admonition may be ſo effectual, as to prevent all occaſion to repeat it in time to come. Thus

Thus I have delineated ſundry dubious characters, and now I leave you to judge whether there be not many ſuch among you. Examine yourſelves thoroughly, that you may have the judgment of God in your favour; for by that you muſt ſtand or fall.

Some of you, perhaps, may think it ſtrange I have omitted ſo many characters that are frequent among us. I have ſaid nothing of the profane ſinner, the drunkard, the ſwearer, the whoremonger, the thief, the knave confeſſed: I have ſaid nothing of the infidel and ſcoffer, who affect to diſbelieve the religion of Jeſus, and relapſe into heatheniſm; and who openly make a mock of things ſacred: I have ſaid nothing of the careleſs creature, who lives in the general neglect of even the forms of religion: I have ſaid nothing of the ſtupid, thoughtleſs creature, who never troubles his head, as he may affect to ſpeak, about religion; and whoſe heart has hardly ever received any impreſſions from it; but who lives like a brute, merely for the purpoſes of the preſent life: I have ſaid nothing of ſuch as theſe, becauſe they do not come under the claſs of doubtful characters: I have no doubt at all about ſuch; I am ſure they are utterly deſtitute of all true religion, and muſt periſh for ever, if they continue in their preſent condition. If you would know how I come to be ſure as to them, I anſwer, Becauſe I believe my reaſon and my Bible; for both put the character and the doom of ſuch beyond all doubt. Common ſenſe is ſufficient to convince me, that ſuch are unholy impenitent ſinners; and I am ſure, both from reaſon and revelation, that an unholy impenitent ſinner, while ſuch, can never enter into the kingdom of heaven. Let ſuch as harbour a wider charity for them, point out the grounds of it. Indeed there is one thing lamentably doubtful as to ſuch; it is very doubtful whether ever their preſent condition will be changed for the better. The moſt promiſing period of life is over with them; and even in that period they continued impenitent under all the means of grace they enjoyed;

ed; and is it not more likely that they will continue ſo in time to come? O! that they would take the alarm, and lay their danger to heart in time, that they may uſe proper means for their deliverance!

Nothing can turn the full evidence againſt them in their favour, and nothing can render the doubtful caſe of the former claſs clear and ſatisfactory, but the formation of Chriſt within them. This alone can put it beyond all doubt that they are chriſtians indeed, and prove their ſure title to everlaſting happineſs. This ſhall be the ſubject of the remainder of this diſcourſe.

Here you would aſk me, I ſuppoſe, what it is to have Chriſt formed within us?

I have already told you briefly, that it ſignifies our being made conformable to him in heart and life, or having his holy image ſtamped upon our hearts. This is eſſential to the character of every true chriſtian. *Chriſt dwells in the heart of ſuch by faith*, Eph. iii. 17. *and if any man have not the ſpirit of Chriſt, he is none of his.* Rom. viii. 9. *He that ſaith he abideth in him, ought himſelf alſo ſo to walk even as he walked*, ſaith St. John, 1 John, ii. 6. *Let the ſame mind be in you*, ſaith St. Paul, *which was alſo in Chriſt Jeſus.* Phil. ii. 5. *Whom he foreknew, he alſo did predeſtinate to be conformed to the image of his Son.* Rom. viii. 29. The temper of a chriſtian has ſuch a reſemblance to Chriſt's, that it may be called Chriſt in embryo, ſpiritually formed within us. It is indeed infinitely ſhort of the all-perfect Original, but yet it is a prevailing temper, and habitually the governing principle of the ſoul. That filial temper towards God, that humble veneration and ſubmiſſion, that ardent devotion, that ſtrict regard to all the duties of religion, that ſelf-denial, humility, meekneſs and patience, that heavenly-mindedneſs and noble ſuperiority to the world, that generous charity, benevolence and mercy to mankind, that ardent zeal and diligence to do good, that temperance and ſobriety which ſhone in the bleſſed Jeſus with a divine incomparable ſplendor; theſe and the like graces and virtues

tues ſhine, though with feebler rays, in all his followers. They have their infirmities indeed, many and great infirmities; but not ſuch as are inconſiſtent with the habitual prevalency of this Chriſt-like diſpoſition. You may make what excuſes you pleaſe, but this is an eternal truth, that unleſs you have a real reſemblance to the holy Jeſus, you are not his genuine diſciples. Pray examine critically into this point. Have you a right to take your name Chriſtian from Chriſt, by reaſon of your conformity to him?

Again, if Chriſt be formed in your hearts, he lives there. The heavenly embryo is not yet complete, not yet ripe for birth into the heavenly world, but it is quickened. I mean, thoſe virtues and graces above mentioned are not dead, inactive principles within you, but they operate, they ſhew themſelves alive by action, they are the governing principles of your practice. You are not like him in heart, unleſs you are like him in life too; and if your life be conformed to his, it will plainly diſtinguiſh you from the world, while it continues ſo wicked. If you are like to him, you will certainly be very unlike to the generality of mankind; and they will acknowledge the difference, and point you out, and hate you, as not belonging to them. They will ſtare at you as an odd unfaſhionable ſtranger, and wonder you do not copy their example.

If we were of the world, ſays Chriſt, *the world would love its own: but becauſe ye are not of the world, but I have choſen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.* John xv. 19.

I hope you now know what it is to have Chriſt formed within you. And in what heart among you is this holy thing conceived and growing? Where are the followers of Jeſus? Surely they are not ſo like the men of the world, the followers of ſin and Satan, as to be undiſtinguiſhable. O! how many impoſtors does this inquiry diſcover, falſe pretenders to chriſtianity, who are the very reverſe of its great Founder! And as many of you as continue unlike to Him now in holineſs,

lineſs, muſt continue unlike to him for ever in happineſs. All Chriſt's heavenly companions are Chriſt-like; they bear his image and ſuperſcription.

Before I diſmiſs this head I muſt obſerve, that the production of this divine infant, if I may ſo call it, in the heart, is entirely the work of the holy Spirit. It is not the growth of nature, but a creation by divine power. It is the hand of God that draws the lineaments of this image upon the heart, though he makes uſe of the goſpel and a variety of means as his pencil.

But you would inquire farther, "In what manner does this divine agent work; or how is Chriſt formed in the hearts of his people?"

I anſwer, The heart of man has a quick ſenſation. Nothing can be done there without its perceiving it, much leſs can Chriſt be formed there, while it is wholly inſenſible of the operation. There is indeed a great variety in the circumſtances, but the ſubſtance of the work is the ſame in all adults. Therefore, if ever you have been the ſubjects of it, you have been ſenſible of the following particulars.

1. You have been made deeply ſenſible of your being intirely deſtitute of this divine image. Your hearts have appeared to you as a huge, ſhapeleſs maſs of corruption, without one ingredient of true goodneſs, amidſt all the flattering appearances of it. In confidence of this diſcovery your high conceit of yourſelves was mortified, your airs of pride and ſelf-conſequence lowered, and you ſaw yourſelves utterly unfit for heaven, that region of purity, and ready to fall, as it were, by your own weight into hell; that ſink of all the pollutions of the moral world. This is the firſt ſtep towards the formation of Chriſt in the ſoul. And have you ever gone thus far? If not, you may be ſure you have never gone farther.

2. You have hereupon ſet yourſelves in earneſt to the uſe of the means appointed for the renovation of your nature. Prayer, hearing the goſpel, and other divine ordinances, were no more lifeleſs, cuſtomary formalities

formalities to you; but you exerted all the vigour of your ſouls in them. You alſo guarded againſt every thing that tended to cheriſh your depraved diſpoſition, and hinder the formation of Chriſt within you. Then you durſt not play with temptation, nor venture within its reach. This is the ſecond ſtep in the proceſs. And have you ever gone thus far? If not, you have never gone farther; and if you have never gone farther, you can never reach the kingdom of God in your preſent condition.

3. You have been made ſenſible of your own weakneſs, and the inefficacy of all the means you could uſe to produce the divine image upon your hearts; and that nothing but the divine hand could draw it there. When you firſt begun your endeavours you had high hopes you would do great things; but, after hard ſtrivings and ſtrugglings, after many prayers and tears, after much reading, hearing and meditation, you found no great effect followed; nay, the corruption of your heart appeared more and more, and hence you concluded you were growing worſe and worſe. Thus the bleſſed Spirit convinced you of your own weakneſs, and the neceſſity of his influence to work this divine change. He cleared away the rubbiſh of pride and ſelf-righteouſneſs from your hearts, in order to prepare them, as a clean canvaſs, to receive the image of Chriſt. And have you ever been thus humbled and mortified? Have you ever been reduced into this medicinal ſelf-deſpair? It is the humble heart alone that is ſuſceptive of the image of the meek and lowly Jeſus. Pride can never receive its lineaments, nor can it be carved on an inſenſible ſtone.

4. Hereupon the Holy Spirit enlightened your minds to view the glory of God in the face of Jeſus Chriſt, and of the method of ſalvation revealed in the goſpel. The bright beams of the divine perfections ſhining in that way of ſalvation, the attractive beauties of holineſs, and all the wonders of the goſpel, ſtruck your minds with delightful aſtoniſhment; and you viewed them

them in a light unknown before. Hereupon you were enabled to caſt your guilty, corrupt, helpleſs ſouls upon Jeſus Chriſt, whom you ſaw to be a glorious, all-ſufficient Saviour; and with all your hearts you embraced the way of ſalvation through his mediation. The view of his glory proved transformative: while you were contemplating the object, you received its likeneſs; the rays of glory beaming upon you, as it were, rendered your hearts tranſparent, and the beauties of holineſs were ſtamped upon them. Thus St. Paul repreſents the matter, *We all with open face beholding, as in a glaſs, the glory of the Lord in the goſpel, are transformed into the ſame image from glory to glory by the Spirit of the Lord.* 2 Cor. iii. 18. Thus your hearts retained the image of his glory, like the face of Moſes after he had been converſing with God in the Mount. You contracted the temper of Jeſus Chriſt, and imbibed his ſpirit: he was formed in your hearts, and began to live and act there. The life you lived in the fleſh, you lived by the faith of the Son of God. Now your minds took a new turn, and your life a new caſt; and the difference began to appear even to the world. Not knowing the divine original, they knew not whoſe image you bore. *Therefore the world knoweth us not,* ſaith St. John, *becauſe it knew him not.* 1 John iii. 1. This, however, they knew, that you did not reſemble them; therefore they looked upon you as odd ſort of creatures, whoſe tempers and manners were as different from theirs as if you were foreigners: you ſoon became as ſpeckled birds among them, and they were weary of your ſociety, and you of theirs. Brethren, have you ever been the ſubjects of this divine operation? Has Chriſt ever been thus formed in your hearts? I ſtand in doubt of ſome of you, though, bleſſed be God! there are others who give good grounds for a charitable hope concerning them, by their apparent likeneſs to Chriſt.

5. If Chriſt has ever been formed in you, it is your perſevering endeavour to improve and perfect this di-

vine image. You long and labour to be fully conformed to him, and, as it were, to catch his air, his manner and ſpirit, in every thought, in every word, and in every action. As far as you are unlike to him, ſo far you appear deformed and loathſome to yourſelves. While you feel an unchriſtian ſpirit prevail within you, you ſeem as if you were poſſeſſed with the devil. And it is the labour of your life to ſubdue ſuch a ſpirit, and to brighten and finiſh the features of the divine image within you, by repeated touches and retouches.

By this ſhort view, my brethren, you may be aſſiſted in determining whoſe image you bear; whether Chriſt's or Satan's, whether Chriſt's or the world's, whether Chriſt's or your own. And let me tell you, if you cannot determine this, you know not but you may be in hell the next hour; for none ſhall ever find admittance into heaven who are not formed after the image of Chriſt. The glorious company upon Mount Sion are all followers of the Lamb: they are like him, for they ſee him as he is. A ſoul unlike to him would be a monſter there; a native of hell broke into heaven; a wolf among lambs; a devil among angels. And can you hope for admiſſion there while you are unlike him? The two grand apartments of the eternal world are under two oppoſite heads; the holy Jeſus preſides in the one—and the Prince of Devils, the prime offender and father of ſin, in the other. Both apartments are thick ſettled with colonies from our world; and the inhabitants of both are like their reſpective heads. Therefore, if ye reſemble the Prince of Heaven, with him you ſhall dwell for ever; but if you reſemble the tyrant of hell, you muſt for ever be his miſerable vaſſals. Therefore puſh home the inquiry, is Chriſt formed in my heart, or is he not?

If he be, then rejoice in it, as a ſure earneſt of the heavenly inheritance. None ever went to hell that carried the image of Chriſt upon their hearts; but the heavenly regions are peopled with ſuch. His image

is the grand paſſport into that country, a paſſport that was never diſputed; and, if you bear it, the celeſtial gates will be flung wide open for your reception, and your human and angelic brethren, who have the ſame looks, the ſame manner, the ſame ſpirit, will all hail your arrival, and ſhout your welcome; will own you as their kindred, from your viſible reſemblance to them; and you will immediately and naturally commence a familiarity with them, from the conformity of your diſpoſitions. The Father of all will alſo own the dear image of his Son, and the bleſſed Jeſus will acknowledge his own image, and confeſs the relation. Bleſſed moment! when wilt thou arrive, when all the followers of the Lamb ſhall appear upon Mount Sion, in his full likeneſs, without ſpot or wrinkle, or any ſuch thing? When no ſtranger of another countenance and another ſpirit ſhall mingle among them, but all be caſt in the ſame mould, and all be clothed in uniform, with the beauties of holineſs, and the robes of ſalvation! O! my brethren, muſt not your eager hearts ſpring forward to meet that day!

But amid all the joy which that tranſporting proſpect affords, it muſt humble you to think, that though Chriſt be really formed in your hearts, it is but very imperfectly, as an unfiniſhed embryo. His image as yet is but very faint; you ſtill carry the traces of ſome infernal features about you. Let this conſideration conſtrain you to put yourſelves daily under the operation of the bleſſed Spirit, till he finiſh the heavenly picture by repeated touches, and diligently attend upon all the means which he is pleaſed to uſe as his pencil. Guard againſt every thing that may deform the divine draught, or delay its perfection. Go on in this way, and the glorious picture will daily catch more and more the likeneſs of the divine original, and ſoon come to complete perfection.

But I muſt ſpeak a concluding word to ſuch of you in whom Chriſt has never yet been formed. Pray turn your eyes upon yourſelves, and ſurvey your own deformity.

formity. Do not you ſee the image of the devil upon you? Have you not forgotten God, and refuſed to love him, like a devil? Have you not loved and practiſed ſin like a devil? or have you not wallowed in ſenſual pleaſures, and confined all your concern to the preſent life, like a beaſt, and thus made yourſelves the moſt horrid monſters, half beaſt, half devil? And can you love yourſelves while this is your character? Can you flatter yourſelves ſuch can be admitted into heaven?

Since it is poſſible your deformed ſpirits may yet receive the image of Chriſt, will you not uſe all poſſible means for that purpoſe while there is hope? This day begin the attempt, reſolve and labour to become new men in this new year.

But, alas! exhortation is but feeble breath, that vaniſhes into air between my lips and your ears; ſomething is wanting to give it force and efficacy. We have the goſpel, we have preaching, we have all the means of ſalvation; but ſomething is wanting to give them life, to make them efficacious, and bear them home upon the hearts of ſinners with that almighty energy which they have ſometimes had. Something, alas! is wanting for this purpoſe: and what is it? It is Thou, Eternal Spirit! Thou, the Author of all good in the hearts of the children of men; thou, the only former of Chriſt within; thou art abſent, and without thee neither he that planteth is any thing, nor he that watereth; they are all nothing together. Come, thou life of ſouls! thou ſpirit of the goſpel! thou quickener of ordinances! thou aſſiſtant of poor miniſters! thou opener of their hearers hearts! Come viſit this congregation. Come to-day: O! come this moment! and Chriſt ſhall be formed in us, the hope and the earneſt of glory!

SERMON

SERMON XLVI.

THE WONDERFUL *COMPASSIONS* OF *CHRIST* TO THE GREATEST *SINNERS.*

MATT. xxiii. 37. *O Jeruſalem, Jeruſalem! thou that killeſt the prophets, and ſtoneſt them that are ſent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!*

THERE is not, perhaps, a chapter in the whole Bible ſo full of ſuch repeated denunciations of the moſt tremendous woes as this. Certainly there is none like it, among all the diſcourſes of Chriſt, left upon record. Here the gentle Jeſus, the inoffenſive Lamb of God, treats the unbelieving Scribes and Phariſees with the moſt pungent ſeverity. Woe, woe, woe, breaks from his lips like repeated claps of thunder. He expoſes them with an aſperity and indignation not uſual in his mild addreſſes. He repeatedly calls them hypocrites, fools, and blind, blind guides, whited ſepulchres, children of hell, ſerpents, a generation of vipers, who could not eſcape the damnation of hell. But in my text he melts into tenderneſs, even in this vein of terror, and appears the ſame compaſſionate, gentle Saviour we are wont to find him. His moſt terrible denunciations were friendly warnings, calculated to reform, and not to deſtroy. And while denouncing the moſt terrible woes againſt Jeruſalem, in an abrupt flow of paſſion, he breaks out into the moſt moving lamentation over her; *O Jeruſalem, Jeruſalem! thou that killeſt the prophets, and ſtoneſt them that are ſent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children*

children together, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!

This is one of thoſe tender caſes which requires a familiar and moving, rather than a grand illuſtration; and that which Jeſus has here choſen is one of the moſt tender, familiar and moving, that could be deviſed. *How often would I have gathered thee, O Jeruſalem, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings.*— As much as to ſay, "As the parent-bird, when ſhe ſees ſome bird of prey hovering over her helpleſs young, gives them the ſignal, which Nature teaches them to underſtand, and ſpreads her wings to protect them, reſolved to become a prey herſelf rather than her tender brood; or, as ſhe ſhelters them from the rain and cold, and cheriſhes them under her friendly feathers, ſo ſays the compaſſionate Redeemer; ſo, O Jeruſalem! I ſee thy children, like heedleſs chickens, in the moſt imminent danger; I ſee the judgments of God hovering over them; I ſee the Roman Eagle ready to ſeize them as its prey; I ſee ſtorms of vengeance ready to fall upon them; and how often have I invited them to fly to me for ſhelter, and give them the ſignal of their danger! how often have I ſpread the wings of my protection to cover them, and keep them warm and ſafe as in my boſom! But, O! lamentable! O! aſtoniſhing! ye would not! I was willing, but ye would not! The ſilly chickens, taught by Nature, underſtand the ſignal of approaching danger, and immediately fly for ſhelter; but ye, more ſilly and preſumptuous, would not regard my warnings; would not believe your danger, nor fly to me for protection, though often, O how often, warned and invited!"

His compaſſion will appear the more ſurpriſing, if we conſider the object of it. "Jeruſalem! Jeruſalem! thou that killeſt the prophets, and ſtoneſt them that are ſent to thee, though upon the kind deſign of reforming and ſaving thee, and who wilt, in a few days, crucify that Saviour who now laments thy doom, how

how often would he have gathered even thy ungrateful children and received them under his protection, with an affection and tenderneſs, like the inſtinctive fondneſs and ſolicitude of the mother-hen for her brood! Here is divine compaſſion indeed, that extends itſelf even to his enemies, to his murderers! Strange! that ſuch generous benevolence ſhould meet with an ungrateful repulſe! that the provoked Sovereign ſhould be willing to receive his rebellious ſubjects into protection, but that they ſhould be unwilling to fly to him for it!"

The important truths which my text ſuggeſts are ſuch as theſe:—That ſinners, while from under the protection of Jeſus Chriſt, are in a very dangerous ſituation—that they may obtain ſafety by putting themſelves under his protection—that he is willing to receive the greateſt ſinners under his protection—that he has often uſed means to prevail upon them to fly to him, that they may be ſafe—that, notwithſtanding all this, multitudes are unwilling to fly to him, and put themſelves under his protection—that this unwillingneſs of theirs is the real cauſe of their deſtruction—that this unwillingneſs is an inſtance of the moſt irrational and brutal ſtupidity—and, that it is very affecting and lamentable.

1. The text implies, that ſinners, while from under the protection of Jeſus Chriſt, are in a very dangerous ſituation. As the hen does not give the ſignal of danger, nor ſpread her wings to ſhelter her young, except when ſhe ſees danger approaching, ſo the Lord Jeſus would not call ſinners to fly to him for protection, were they not in real danger. Sinners, you are in danger from the curſe of the divine law, which is in full force againſt you, while you have no intereſt in the righteouſneſs of Chriſt, which alone can anſwer its demands: You are in danger from the dread arreſt of divine juſtice, which guards the ſacred rights of the divine government, and will avenge itſelf upon you for all the inſults you have offered it: You are in danger

danger from the various judgments of God, who is angry with you every day, and whoſe judgments are hovering over you, and ready to ſeize you, like hungry birds of prey: You are in danger from your own vile corruptions, which may hurry you into ſuch courſes as may be inconvenient, or, perhaps, ruinous to you in this world, may harden you in impenitence, and at length deſtroy you for ever: You are in danger from your own conſcience, which would be your beſt friend; but it is now ready to riſe up in arms againſt you, and, like an inſatiable vulture, prey upon your hearts for ever: You are in danger from the arreſt of death, which is ready every moment to ſtretch out its mortal hand, and ſeize you: You are in danger from the malice and power of devils, who, like hungry lions, are ready to ſnatch away your ſouls, as their helpleſs prey. In ſhort, you are ſurrounded with dangers on every hand, and dangers riſe ſtill more thick and dreadful before you. You are not ſure of an hour's enjoyment of one comfort; nay, you are not ſure there is ſo much as one moment betwixt you and all the miſeries of the damned. This minute you are upon earth, thoughtleſs, ſecure and gay; but the next may be—I tremble to tell you where—in the lake that burneth with fire and brimſtone, tormented in flames. Yes, ſinners, one flying moment may ſtrip you entirely naked of all the enjoyments of earth, cut you off from all hope of heaven, and ingulph you in remedileſs deſpair. Some of you, whoſe very caſe this is, will not, probably, believe me, nor take the alarm. But here, alas! lies your principal danger. If you would take warning in time, you might eſcape; but you will not believe there is danger until it becomes inevitable.—Had Lot's ſons-in-law taken warning from him, they might have eſcaped; but they ſaw no ſenſible appearances of the impending judgment, and, therefore, they continued blindly ſecure, regarded the good old man as a mocker, and, therefore, periſhed in Sodom. Had Jeruſalem been apprehenſive of its danger in time, it might

might have flouriſhed to this day; but it would not be warned, and, therefore, became a ruinous heap: and this will be your doom, ſinners, unleſs you be apprehenſive of it before it breaks upon you like a whirlwind. Indeed it may make one ſad to think how common this danger is, and how little it is apprehended, to ſee crouds thoughtleſs and merry on the brink of ruin; ſecure and careleſs, while hanging over the infernal pit by the frail thread of life. This is ſad; but, alas! it is a common caſe in the world, and I am afraid, it is too common among you, my hearers. And whither ſhall you fly for ſafety? Is the danger inevitable? If ſo, where is the friendly arm that can guard you? where the wing that can ſhelter you from thoſe judgments that are hovering over you, like ravenous birds, to make a prey of you? Bleſſed be God, I can ſhew you a place of ſafety; for,

2. The text implies, that if ſinners fly to Chriſt, and put themſelves under his protection, they ſhall obtain ſafety.

The beautiful alluſion to the protection a hen affords her young under the ſhelter of her wings, implies thus much, as we may learn from the meaning of the ſame alluſion in other places. So in that beautiful paſſage, Pſalm. xci. 1—4. *He that dwelleth in the ſecret place of the Moſt High, ſhall abide under the ſhadow of the Almighty. I will ſay of the Lord, he is my refuge, and my fortreſs—Surely he ſhall deliver thee from the ſnare of the fowler—He ſhall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings ſhalt thou truſt;* that is, he ſhall protect thee in ſafety, and thou ſhalt truſt in his guardian care. This is David's meaning, when he prays, *Lord hide me under the ſhadow of thy wings.* Pſalm xvii. 8. And when he reſolves, *yea, in the ſhadow of thy wings will I make my refuge, until theſe calamities be over-paſt;* juſt as the hen's helpleſs brood hide under her wings until the ſtorm be blown over, or the bird of prey has diſappeared. Pſalm lvii. 1. *I will truſt,* ſays he, *in the covert of thy wings.* Pſalm lxi. 4. *Becauſe thou haſt been*

my help, therefore in the ſhadow of thy wings will I rejoice. Pſalm lxiii. 7. *

How great and ſeemingly inevitable your dangers; yet, if you place yourſelves under the protection of Jeſus Chriſt, you are ſafe for ever; ſafe from the deluges of divine wrath, that are ready to ruſh down upon you; ſafe from the ſword of juſtice, and the thunders of Sinai! ſafe from the inteſtine inſurrections of your own conſcience, and from the power and malice of infernal ſpirits; ſafe from the oppreſſion of ſin, and you ſhall be glorioufly triumphant over death itſelf, the king of terrors. Theſe may diſturb and alarm you, they may give you a ſlight wound, and put you in great terror; but none of them can do you a laſting, remedileſs injury; nay, the very injuries you may receive from them in this life, will, in the iſſue, turn out to your advantage, and become real bleſſings to you. If ye are Chriſt's, then, ſaith the apoſtle, *all things are yours, whether life or death, or things preſent, or things to come, all are yours.* 1 Cor. iii. 21. that is, you have a kind of property in all things that you have any connection with, ſo that they ſhall work together for your good, as if they were all your own by a private right. Brethren, if we are covered with the righteouſneſs of Chriſt, the ſword of divine juſtice cannot reach us. All its demands are anſwered, and juſtice itſelf becomes our friend. If we are ſheltered under the wings of his guardian care, the moſt threatening dangers of time or eternity cannot affect us with real injury. How happy then, how ſafe are ſuch of you as have put yourſelves under his protection! Now every bleſſing is yours, and nothing can do you a real injury. You ſhall never fall a prey to your various enemies, but ſhall at length obtain an illuſtrious victory over them all, through the blood of the Lamb. To you I may apply thoſe ſublime words of Moſes, *As an eagle*

* See the ſame metaphor, uſed in much the ſame ſenſe, in Pſalm xxxvi. 7. Exod. xix. 4. Deut. xxxii. 11. though, in the two laſt places, it includes conduct as well as protection.

eagle ſtirreth up her neſt, fluttereth over her young, ſpreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings, ſo the Lord alone does and will lead you, Deut. xxxii. 11, 12. defend you, cheriſh you, and bear you along to your eternal home. You have, therefore, reaſon, with David, amidſt all the peculiar dangers of his life, to rejoice under the ſhadow of his wings. The name of the Lord is a ſtrong tower, and you have fled to it, and are ſafe. Amidſt all your fears and terrors, have you not ſome ſecure and delightful hours, when you, as it were, feel yourſelves gathered under the wings of your Redeemer? In ſuch hours, do not even ſuch weaklings as you dare to brave all your enemies, and bid defiance to earth and hell? O how happy, how ſecure is your ſituation!

But here a grand queſtion riſes in the minds of ſome of you, "How may I know whether I have fled to Jeſus for protection? How may I know whether I have placed myſelf under his guardian wings?" This is a queſtion of the utmoſt importance; and I muſt offer a word or two in anſwer to it. Obſerve then, If ever you have fled to Jeſus for ſafety, you have been made deeply ſenſible of your danger. If ever you have ſought ſhelter under his wings, you have ſeen your ſins, the curſes of the law, and the powers of hell, as it were, hovering over you, and ready to ſeize and devour you as their prey. You have alſo been made deeply ſenſible, that Jeſus alone was able to ſave you. You found you could not ſhelter yourſelves under the covert of your own righteouſneſs, and were conſtrained to give up all hopes of ſaving yourſelves by any thing you could do in your own ſtrength. Hereupon, as periſhing, helpleſs creatures, you have caſt yourſelves entirely upon the protection of Jeſus Chriſt, and put your ſouls into his hands, to be ſaved by him in his own way: And you have alſo ſubmitted freely to his authority, willing to be ruled and diſpoſed of entirely according to his pleaſure. Theſe few things muſt ſuffice to determine this grand inquiry; and I hope you will make uſe of them

for

for that purpoſe: If they help you to diſcover, that you have fled to Jeſus for refuge, rejoice in your happy lot, and let your mouths be filled with praiſe. But alas! are there not ſome of you that have made the contrary diſcovery, and, conſequently, that you are expoſed to all the dreadful dangers of a ſinner without Chriſt? And is there no place of ſafety for you? Yes, under thoſe wings where believers have ſheltered themſelves. In Jeſus Chriſt there is ſafety, if you fly to him: but you may perhaps enquire, "What encouragement have I to fly to him? I, who am ſo vile a ſinner; I, who have nothing at all to recommend me! Can I hope that he will ſtretch out the wings of his mercy, and receive me into protection?" Yes, poor trembling creature, even you may venture; for remember what my text farther implies, viz.

3. That the compaſſionate Jeſus is willing to receive the very greateſt ſinner under his protection. Can you queſtion this, after this moving lamentation of his over Jeruſalem! Jeruſalem, that killed the prophets, and ſtoned them that were ſent unto her, though upon meſſages of grace; Jeruſalem, upon whom ſhould come all the righteous blood of the prophets, through a length of near 4000 years, from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zacharias; Jeruſalem, the den of thoſe murderers, who, he well knew, would in a few days imbrue their hands in his own blood; Jeruſalem, that had abuſed ſo many mercies, been incorrigible under ſo many chaſtiſements, deaf to ſo many invitations; yet, of this very city, the compaſſionate Saviour ſays, *How often would I have gathered thy children* under the wings of my protection; thy children, obſtinate and ungrateful as they are! O what gracious encouragement is here to the greateſt ſinners among us! Jeſus is the ſame yeſterday, to-day, and for ever; the ſame compaſſionate, all-ſufficient Saviour. He did not loſe his pity for Jeruſalem after he had ſuffered death by her bloody hands; but after his reſurrection he orders his apoſtles to make one trial more with her obſtinate children:

Go,

Go, ſays he, *and preach repentance and remiſſion of ſins to all nations, beginning at Jeruſalem*, Luke xxiv. 41. as much as to ſay, "Though Jeruſalem be the ungrateful city, where ſo much pains have been taken in vain, and where I have juſt been crucified with cruel hands, yet do not give them up; try once more to gather them under my wings; yea, let them have the very firſt offer of grace under this new diſpenſation; make the firſt offer of pardon through my blood to the wretches that ſhed my blood; invite them to me as a Saviour, who nailed me to the croſs as a malefactor and a ſlave." O what melting overpowering mercy! What overflowing and free grace are here! This exemplifies his own declaration, that *he came not to call the righteous, but ſinners to repentance;* and ſinners of the vileſt characters are welcome to him. He took care, at the firſt introduction of the goſpel, to ſelect ſome of the moſt daring ſinners, and make them the monuments of his grace to all ages, that their hiſtory might give the ſtrongeſt aſſurance of his grace to ſinners of the like character, from that time to the end of the world. Such an inſtance was the famous St. Paul. *This is a faithful ſaying*, ſays he; a ſaying that may be depended upon, *and worthy of all acceptation;* worthy to be received as true, and embraced with joy by all the ſons of men, *that Chriſt Jeſus came into the world to ſave ſinners, of which I am the chief.* 1 Tim. i. 15. This chieftain, this king of ſinners, was made a happy ſubject of Jeſus Chriſt. And *for this cauſe*, ſays he, *I obtained mercy, that in me firſt, or in me the chief,* * *Jeſus Chriſt might ſhew forth all long-ſuffering, for a pattern to them which ſhould hereafter believe on him.* Bleſſed be God, there are many ſuch inſtances now in heaven, in the glorious company of angels! "There, as one obſerves, is murderous and idolatrous Manaſſeh among the true worſhippers of God; there is oppreſſing Zaccheus

* The ſame word in the ſame ſenſe is thus tranſlated two or three words before—ὧν [ſcil. ἁμαρτωλῶν] πρῶτός εἰμι ἐγω—and then follows—ἐν ἐμοὶ πρώτῳ, 1 Tim. i. 15, 16.

cheus among the ſpirits of juſt men made perfect; there is Mary Magdalen, poſſeſſed by ſeven devils, among the ſaints of the Moſt High, filled with the Holy Spirit of God. In a word, there are the betrayers and murderers of our bleſſed Lord and Saviour, receiving eternal life and happineſs from that precious blood which their own guilty hands did ſhed." † And what

† Dr. Groſvenor, in a Sermon, intitled, "The Temper of Jeſus Chriſt towards his Enemies, and his Grace to the chief of Sinners, in his commanding the Goſpel to begin at Jeruſalem," has the following very lively and ſtriking paſſage:—"It is very affecting that the firſt offers of grace ſhould be made to thoſe who, of all people in the world, had done it the moſt deſpite! That the heavenly gift ſhould be tendered to thoſe firſt who leaſt deſerved it: not that any can deſerve it at all, for then it were not grace; but they of all people had moſt deſerved the contrary! That they, who had abuſed Chriſt to a degree beyond the moſt pitiful deſcription, ſhould yet lie uppermoſt in his care, and ſtand foremoſt in his pity, and find ſo much mercy from one to whom they ſhowed none at all!

"One would rather have expected the apoſtles ſhould have received another kind of charge, and that Chriſt ſhould have ſaid, Let repentance and remiſſion of ſins be preached, but carry it not to Jeruſalem, that wicked city, that has been the ſlaughter-houſe of my prophets, whom I have often ſent. After them I ſent John the Baptiſt, a burning and a ſhining light; him they killed in priſon. Laſt of all, I myſelf, the Son, came alſo; and me, with wicked hands, they have crucified and ſlain. They may do the ſame by you; the diſciple is not like to be better (treated) than his Lord: let not the goſpel enter thoſe gates, through which they led me, its author, to crucifixion.

"I have been preaching there myſelf theſe three years, I have mingled my tears with my ſermons, I have ſupported my pretenſions and character from the ſcriptures of Moſes and the prophets, I have confirmed them by divine miracles, and ſealed all with my blood, yet they would not give ear: *O Jeruſalem! Jeruſalem!* all that I have left for thee now is, what I have before dropt over thee, viz. a compaſſionate tear and wiſh, *that thou hadſt known in this thy day the things that belonged to thy peace! but now they are hid from thy eyes*; and ſo let them remain; for I charge you, my apoſtles, to *preach repentance and remiſſion of ſins* to all other nations, but come not near that wicked city.

"But God's thoughts are not as ours, neither are his ways as our ways; but as far as the heavens are above the earth, ſo are his thoughts and ways above ours. Our way is, to make the chief offenders examples of juſtice, to avenge ourſelves upon thoſe who have done us perſonal injury and wrong; but Chriſt chooſes out theſe to make examples of mercy, and commands the firſt offer of eternal life to be made to them, and all the world are to wait till they have had the firſt refuſal of the goſpel-ſalvation.

"As

what farther arguments need I produce of the willingneſs of Jeſus Chriſt to receive the vileſt ſinner among you, upon your coming to him? I might prove the ſame joyful truth from his repeated declarations, from his indefinite invitations, and eſpecially from that kind aſſurance which has kept many a ſoul from ſinking: *him that cometh unto me I will in nowiſe caſt out.* John vi.

" As if our Lord had ſaid, It is true my ſufferings are an univerſal remedy, and I have given my life a ranſom for many, that the Gentiles afar off might be brought nigh, and all the ends of the earth might ſee the ſalvation of God, and therefore *go into all nations* and offer this ſalvation as you go; but, leſt the poor houſe of Iſrael ſhould think themſelves abandoned to deſpair, the ſeed of Abraham, mine ancient friend, as cruel and unkind as they have been, go, make them the firſt offer of grace, let them have the firſt refuſal of goſpel mercy; let them that ſtruck the rock, drink firſt of its refreſhing ſtreams; and they that drew my blood, be welcome to its healing virtue.

" Tell them, that as I was ſent to the *loſt ſheep of the houſe of Iſrael*, ſo, if they will be gathered, I will be their Shepherd ſtill. Though they deſpiſed my tears, which I ſhed over them, and imprecated my blood to be upon them, tell them it was for their ſakes I ſhed both, that by my tears I might ſoften their hearts towards God, and by my blood I might reconcile God to them.

" Tell them I live; and becauſe I am alive again, my death ſhall not be their damnation; nor is my murder an unpardonable ſin, but that the blood of Jeſus cleanſeth from all ſin, even the ſin by which that blood was drawn.

" Tell them, you have ſeen the prints of the nails upon my hands and feet, and the wound of the ſpear in my ſide, and that thoſe marks of their cruelty are ſo far from giving me vindictive thoughts, that every wound they have given me ſpeaks in their behalf, pleads with the Father for remiſſion of their ſins, and enables me to beſtow it; and by thoſe ſufferings which they may be ready to think have exaſperated me againſt them, by thoſe very wounds, court and perſuade them to receive the ſalvation they have procured.

" Nay, if you meet that poor wretch that thruſt the ſpear into my ſide, tell him, there is another way, a better way of coming to my heart, even my heart's love, if he will repent, *and look upon him whom he hat pierced*, and will mourn, I will cheriſh him in that very boſom he has wounded; he ſhall find the blood he ſhed an ample atonement for the ſin of ſhedding it. And tell him from me, he will put me to more pain and diſpleaſure by refuſing this offer of my blood, than when he firſt drew it forth. In ſhort,

" Though they have gainſayed my doctrine, blaſphemed my divinity, and abuſed and tormented my perſon, taken away my life, and, what is next valuable to every honeſt man, endeavoured to murder my reputati-

on,

vi. 37. But this argument from matters of fact is ſufficient. Therefore come, ſinners, fly to Jeſus, however deep your guilt. Had you been murderers of fathers, or murderers of mothers; nay, had you come hither this day with hands reeking in the blood of the Son of God, yet, if you repent and believe, he is willing to receive you under the ſhadow of his wings. I may therefore invite you in the language of the following lines: *

Outcaſts of men, to you I call,
Harlots, and publicans, and thieves;
He ſpreads his arms t' embrace you all;
Sinners alone his grace receives.
Come, all ye Magdalens in luſt:
Ye ruffians fell, in murders old,
Repent and live; deſpair and truſt!
Jeſus for you to death was ſold.
Come, O my guilty brethren, come,
Groaning beneath your load of ſin!
His bleeding heart ſhall make you room,
His wounded ſide ſhall take you in.
He calls you all, invites you home:
Come, O my guilty brethren, come!

To encourage you the more, and even to conſtrain you, conſider what my text implies farther, viz.

4. That the Lord Jeſus has often uſed means to prevail upon you to fly to him for ſafety. What he ſays to Jeruſalem may be applied to you: *how often would I have gathered thy children together!* How often has he given you the ſignal of danger, that you might fly from it! how often has he ſpread out a friendly wing to ſhelter you! as often as the law has denounced his curſes againſt you; as often as the goſpel has invited and

on too, by making me an impoſter, and imputing my miracles to a combination with Beelzebub; however, go to Jeruſalem, and by beginning there, ſhow them ſuch a miracle of goodneſs and grace, that they themſelves muſt confeſs too good for the Devil to have any hand in, too God-like for him to be aſſiſting to; that may convince them of their ſin, and at the ſame time, that nothing can be greater than their ſin, except this mercy and grace of mine, which, where their ſin has abounded does thus much more abound, beginning at Jeruſalem."

* Mr. Weſley.

and allured you; as often as conſcience has checked and warned you, or prompted you to your duty; as often as the Holy Spirit has moved upon your hearts, and excited ſome ſerious thoughts and good purpoſes and inclinations; as often as providence has allured you with its profuſion of bleſſings, or chaſtened you with its afflictive rod; as often as you have ſeen a good example, or heard a pious word dropt in converſation; in ſhort, as often as any means of any kind have been uſed with you, that had a tendency to make you ſenſible of your danger, or your need of Jeſus Chriſt, ſo often has he uſed means with you to engage you to fly to the ſhelter of his wings for protection. O! how frequently, and by what a great variety of means, has he called you in this congregation! This is the very buſineſs of one day in ſeven, when you are called away from the noiſe and buſtle of the world to liſten to the voice of his invitation. But this is not the only time when he calls you. While you are at home, or following your buſineſs through the reſt of the week, you have a Bible, a Providence, a conſcience, and the Holy Spirit, ſtill with you; and theſe are ſtill urging you to fly to Jeſus, though their voice may be diſregarded, and loſt in the din and confuſion of the world around you. The gracious call of a compaſſionate Saviour has followed you ever ſince you were capable of hearing it to this day. But alas! does not the next remark hold true as to ſome of you, viz.

5. That, notwithſtanding all this, multitudes are unwilling to fly to him for protection! It was not of Jeruſalem alone that he had reaſon to ſay, *I would have gathered you, but ye would not!* I was willing, but ye were unwilling. This is ſtrange indeed, and might ſeem incredible, were it not a moſt notorious fact. That the Judge ſhould be willing to pardon, but the criminal unwilling to receive a pardon—that the offended Sovereign ſhould be ready to take a periſhing rebel under his protection, but the rebel ſhould ſtand off, and rather periſh than fly to him—this is a moſt

aſtoniſhing thing; and it is the hardeſt thing in the world to convince ſinners that this is their conduct towards the Lord Jeſus. They are generally more ſuſpicious of his willingneſs to ſave them, than of their own to come to him. Were he but as willing to ſave them as they are to be ſaved by him, they think there would be no danger of their ſalvation; but the caſe is directly the reverſe; the unwillingneſs lies entirely upon their ſide. To convince them of this, let it be conſidered, that we are not truly willing to be ſaved by Chriſt at all, unleſs we are willing to be ſaved by him in his own way, or upon his own terms. We are not willing to be ſaved, unleſs the nature of the ſalvation offered be agreeable to us. Now one principal part of the ſalvation which we need, and which Chriſt offers, is deliverance from ſin; deliverance from the power, the pleaſures, the profits of ſin, as well as from the deſtructive conſequences of it in the world to come. And are ſinners willing to accept of ſuch a ſalvation as this from Chriſt? No, this appears no ſalvation to them; this ſeems rather a confinement, a loſs, a bereavement. They are willing to indulge themſelves in ſin, and therefore it is impoſſible they ſhould, in the mean time, be willing to be reſtrained from it, or deprived of it. This is the thing they ſtruggle againſt, and to which all the means uſed with them cannot bring them. To tear their ſins from them is to rob them of their pleaſures; and they riſe up in arms againſt the attempt. And are theſe willing to be ſaved by Chriſt, who abhor the ſalvation he offers them? The truth of the matter is, the conduct of ſinners in this caſe is the greateſt abſurdity: they are willing to be happy, but they are not willing to be holy, in which alone their happineſs conſiſts: they are willing to be ſaved from hell, but they are not willing to be ſaved from thoſe diſpoſitions which would create a hell within them, even according to the nature of things: they are willing to go to heaven when they can live no longer in this their favourite world; but they

they are unwilling to be prepared for it in their temper and diſpoſition. An eternity ſpent in holy exerciſes would be an eternal drudgery to them, unleſs they have a reliſh for holineſs. Freedom from ſin would be a painful bereavement to them while they take pleaſure in ſin, and how then could they be happy, even in the very region of happineſs, ſince the ſordid pleaſures of ſin never mingle with thoſe pure rivers of living water? In ſhort, they act as abſurdly as if they were willing to recover their health, and yet were unwilling to part with their ſickneſs, or to be reſtrained from thoſe things which are the cauſes of it. They are willing to go to heaven, but it is in their own way; that is, in the way that leads to hell. The only way of ſalvation, according to the divine appointment, is the way of holineſs. Indeed Chriſt came into the world to ſave ſinners; but theſe ſinners muſt be made ſaints before they can enter into his kingdom: and he makes them holy in order to be happy. And this is not an arbitrary appointment, but neceſſary, in the very nature of things; for, as I obſerved, till they are made holy, it is impoſſible in the nature of things they ſhould be happy in heaven, becauſe the happineſs of heaven conſiſts in the perfection of holineſs. To be ſaved without holineſs is as impoſſible as to be healthy without health, or ſaved without ſalvation. Therefore, for God to gratify the ſinner, and gratify him in his own way; that is, in his ſins, is an impoſſibility; as impoſſible as for a phyſician to heal an obſtinate patient in his own way; that is, to heal him by letting him retain and cheriſh his diſeaſe; letting him cool a fever with cold water, or drink poiſon to cure a conſumption. God is wiſe in all his conſtitutions, and therefore the way of ſalvation through Chriſt is agreeable to the nature of things; it is in itſelf conſiſtent and poſſible: and if ſinners are not willing to be ſaved in this poſſible way, they are not willing, in reality, to be ſaved at all.

Again,

Again, The way of ſalvation by Chriſt is all through grace. It is adapted to ſtain the glory, and mortify the pride of all fleſh, and to advance to the mercy of God, and the honour of Chriſt, without a rival. Now haughty, ſelf-righteous ſinners are unwilling to be ſaved in this humbling, mortifying way, and therefore they are unwilling to be ſaved by Chriſt. If they would be ſaved by him, they muſt be ſaved entirely upon the footing of his merit, and not their own; they muſt own that they lie at mercy, they muſt feel themſelves ſelf-condemned, they muſt utterly renounce all dependance upon their own righteouſneſs, and receive every bleſſing as the free unmerited gift of grace. And it is the hardeſt thing imaginable to bring a proud ſinner ſo low as this; but till he is brought thus low, he cannot be ſaved upon the goſpel-plan. Nor is this part of the conſtitution arbitrary any more than the former. It would be inconſiſtent with the honour of the great God, the Supreme Magiſtrate of the univerſe, and with the dignity of his government, to receive a rebel into favour, on any other footing than that of mere grace. If after ſinning ſo much, the ſinner ſtill has merit enough to procure a pardon, in whole or in part, or to render it cruel or unjuſt for God to condemn and puniſh him, certainly he muſt be a Being of very great importance indeed; and ſin againſt God muſt be a very ſmall evil. To ſave a ſinner in a way that would give any room for ſuch inſinuations as theſe, would be inconſiſtent with the honour of God and his government; and therefore the plan he has conſtituted is a method of grace, of pure rich grace, in all and every part. Now, while ſinners are not willing to be ſaved in this way, they are not willing to be ſaved at all. Here lies their grand miſtake: Becauſe they have a general willingneſs that Chriſt ſhould ſave them from hell, they, therefore, conclude they are really willing to come to him according to the goſpel-conſtitution, whereas there is nothing in the world to which they are more averſe. There are many that think, and perhaps declare,

clare, they would give ten thouſand worlds for Chriſt, when, in reality, they are not willing to receive him as a free gift: they are not yet brought to that extremity as to fly to him. No, the ſinner is brought low indeed before he is brought to this. He is entirely cut off from all hope from every other quarter; particularly, he ſees that he cannot ſhelter himſelf any longer under the covert of his own righteouſneſs, but that he will be overwhelmed with a deluge of divine vengeance, unleſs he hides himſelf under the wings of Jeſus.

I beg you would examine yourſelves impartially on this point, my brethren, for here lies the grand deluſion that ruins thouſands. If you are really willing to fly to Jeſus, and be ſaved by him in his own way, you may be ſure he is infinitely more willing than you are; nay, your willingneſs is the effect of his, for he firſt made you ſo. But if, when you examine the matter to the bottom, you find, that, notwithſtanding all your pretenſions, you are really unwilling to fly to him, conſider your dangerous ſituation; for,

6. The text implies, that this unwillingneſs of ſinners is the real cauſe of their deſtruction.

Sinners complain of the want of ability; but what is their inability but their unwillingneſs? Coming to Chriſt is an act of the will, and, therefore, to will it heartily, is to perform the act. To be unable to come to him is to be ſo perverſe, ſo diſaffected to Jeſus Chriſt, as not to have power to will to come to him. This, by the way, ſhews the vanity of that popular excuſe, "I am not able to fly to Chriſt, and therefore it is not my fault if I do not." That is, you are ſo wicked that you can do no good thing; you are ſo diſaffected to Jeſus Chriſt that you have no will, no inclination, to chooſe him for your Saviour; you are ſuch an obſtinate enemy to him, that you would rather periſh than take him for your Friend; therefore your not coming to him is no crime. Is this conſiſtent reaſoning? Is it not all one, as if a rebel ſhould think to excuſe himſelf by pleading, "I have ſuch an inveterate hatred to my ſovereign,

ſovereign, that I cannot love him:" Or a robber, "I have ſuch an averſion to honeſty, that I cannot poſſibly help ſtealing?" Would not this be an aggravation of the crime rather than an excuſe? Is the invincible ſtrength of your diſaffection to Chriſt a vindication of it? Are you the more excuſable, by how much the more you hate him?—Sinners, give up this fooliſh reaſoning, for the matter is too important to be trifled with. Your inability in this caſe is nothing elſe but your unwillingneſs; and your unwillingneſs is the effect of nothing elſe but your diſaffection to Jeſus Chriſt; therefore own that this is the true cauſe of your deſtruction.

In ſhort, whatever pleas and excuſes you make, you will find at laſt that your deſtruction is entirely the effect of your own perverſe choice. *Ye will not come unto Chriſt that ye might have life*, John v. 40. and therefore you muſt periſh without it. This reflection will for ever torment you, that you wilfully deſtroyed yourſelves, and were guilty of the moſt unnatural ſelf-murder. Jeſus was willing, but you would not. God has even ſworn that he *has no pleaſure in the death of the wicked, but that he turn and live.* To you therefore I may properly addreſs that expoſtulation, *Why will ye die?* Why will ye? why do ye moſt wilfully deſtroy yourſelves? why do ye ruin yourſelves by your own free choice? why will you die? you, whom Jeſus is willing to ſave, whom he has ſo often invited, why will you, above all men in the world, cauſeleſsly die by your own act? Are you capable of ſo much ſtupidity? It is a ſtupidity that is a dreadful peculiarity of your own, for,

7. Unwillingneſs to fly to Jeſus is the moſt irrational, and worſe than brutal ſtupidity.

This is implied in my text. No ſooner does the hen give the ſignal of danger, than her little family, taught by inſtinct to underſtand the alarm, immediately fly under her wings. "So, ſays Chriſt, I gave you the alarm, but you would not regard it; ſo I ſpread

ſpread out the wing of my guardian care to defend you, but you would not ſhelter under it." What more than brutal ſtupidity is this? In this light, the conduct of ſinners is frequently expoſed in the ſacred writings. *The ox knoweth his owner*, ſays Iſaiah, *and the aſs his maſter's crib, but Iſrael doth not know, my people doth not conſider.* Iſaiah i. 3. *Every one turneth to his courſe*, ſays Jeremiah, *as the horſe ruſheth into the battle; yea, the ſtork in the heavens knoweth her appointed times; and the turtle, and the crane, and the ſwallow, obſerve the time of their coming; but my people*, more ſtupid than they, *know not the judgment of the Lord.* Jer. viii. 6, 7. To refuſe the offer of eternal ſalvation, when propoſed upon the moſt reaſonable terms—to ruſh into hell, rather than be ſaved by the friendly hands of Jeſus Chriſt—to ſuffer the moſt terrible execution, rather than accept a free pardon—to reject all the bliſs of heaven when freely propoſed—to chooſe the pleaſures of ſin for a ſeaſon, rather than an eternity of the moſt exalted happineſs—to reſiſt the calls of redeeming love, and all the friendly efforts of divine grace, to ſave a ſinking ſoul—Is this the conduct of a reaſonable creature? No; ſhew me the brute, if you can, that would act ſo ſtupid a part in things that come within the ſphere of his capacity. Would it not be better for you to be a cat or dog (to uſe the language of the Earl of Rocheſter) than that animal Man, who is ſo proud of being rational, if you make ſo irrational a choice? Let me endeavour to make you ſenſible,

8. And laſtly, That this conduct is extremely affecting and lamentable.

It is on this account, that Jeſus laments over Jeruſalem in ſuch pathetic ſtrains in my text. He knew the truth of the caſe; his all-ſeeing eye took it in all its extent, and viewed it in all its circumſtances and conſequences. And ſince he, who knew it beſt, deeply laments it, we may be ſure it is lamentable indeed, and it cannot but appear ſo even to us who know ſo little of it. An immortal ſoul loſt! loſt for ever! loſt by its

its own obſtinacy! loſt amidſt the means of ſalvation! how tragical a caſe is this?—God diſhonoured! Jeſus rejected! his love defeated! his blood trampled upon! his ſpirits grieved! how lamentable is this?—And yet are there not ſome of you in this lamentable condition in this aſſembly? It was over ſuch as you that Jeſus wept and mourned. And ſhall he weep alone? ſhall not our tears keep time with his, ſince we are ſo much more nearly concerned? *O that our heads were waters, and our eyes fountains of tears*, that we might weep along with the Saviour of men! But, alas! our tears are too much reſerved for dying friends, or ſome leſs affecting object, while immortal ſouls periſh around us, unpitied, unlamented!

SERMON XLVII.

THE *NATURE* OF *LOVE* TO *GOD* AND *CHRIST* OPENED AND ENFORCED.

JOHN xxi. 17. *He ſaith unto him the third time, Simon, ſon of Jonas, loveſt thou me? Peter was grieved becauſe he ſaid unto him the third time, Loveſt thou me? And he ſaid unto him, Lord, thou knoweſt all things; thou knoweſt that I love thee. Jeſus ſaith unto him, Feed my ſheep.*

THERE is nothing more eſſential to religion, or of more importance in it, than divine love. Divine love is the ſole ſpring of all acceptable obedience in this life, and the grand prerequiſite for complete happineſs in the enjoyment of God in the world to come; and without it, all our religion, all our gifts and improvements, however high and miraculous, are vain.

And

And as it is of the utmoſt importance in reality, it is confeſſed to be ſo by all mankind, who acknowledge the exiſtence of a Deity. Whatever be the religion, or whatever be the object, ſtill it is univerſally acknowledged, that love is an eſſential part of it. And indeed the evidence for this is ſo very glaring, that it is no wonder mankind have not been able to ſhut their eyes againſt it. Religion without love, is as great a contradiction as friendſhip without love. To worſhip a God whom we do not love, to adore excellences which we diſaffect, to profeſs a religion founded by an enemy, this is the greateſt abſurdity imaginable. Such a religion muſt appear abominable to God and man.

Now divine love is the ſubject of my text, which I have choſen for your preſent meditation; and you ſee I have not choſen a ſubject that is trifling in itſelf, or the diſputed peculiarity of a party. You need not, therefore, be under apprehenſions, that I would proſelyte you to any thing but the ſincere love of God and Jeſus Chriſt. However, I would not have you judge of my deſign by my verbal declarations, but by the apparent tendency of my diſcourſe, of which you will be able to form a judgment when I have done.—Therefore entertain no prejudices or ſuſpicions till you ſee reaſon, leſt you deprive yourſelves of that benefit you might otherwiſe receive from your preſent attendance.

There is ſo little ſolicitous inquiry among men concerning the ſincerity of their love to God, that it would ſeem ſelf-evident, and beyond all diſpute.—Whatever ſins they indulge themſelves in, however much they practically neglect God and religion, yet ſtill they inſiſt upon it, they love him ſincerely. This piece of merit they all claim, as belonging to them beyond diſpute. But is divine love indeed a thing ſo common, ſo univerſal? We read that *the carnal mind is enmity againſt God.* Rom. viii. 7. And is there no ſuch thing as a carnal mind now to be found upon

earth? We are told of ſome that were *haters of God.* Rom. i. 30. — *enemies in their minds by wicked works.* Col. i. 21. And are there none ſuch to be found among us? The heart-ſearching Jeſus, while converſant among mortals, told the Jews, who made ſo great a profeſſion of their love to God, and ſuſpected their own ſincerity as little as any of us, *I know you, that you have not the love of God in you.* John v. 42. And were he now to paſs ſentence upon us, would he not make the ſame declaration with regard to ſundry of us, who, perhaps, are leaſt apprehenſive of it? Is it a needleſs thing for us to enter into a ſerious conference with our own hearts, and aſk them, "Do I indeed love the ever bleſſed God, and the only Saviour? Will my love ſtand the teſt? What are its properties and effects?" Is this, my brethren, a ſuperfluous or impertinent inquiry? I am ſure it did not ſeem ſo to Chriſt, who put Peter to the trial upon this point no leſs than thrice.

Our Lord made a meal with his diſciples, to convince them of the reality of his body after his reſurrection. When it was finiſhed, he turns to Peter, and aſks him a very ſerious queſtion, *Simon, ſon of Jonas, loveſt thou me?* The very propoſal of the queſtion ſeems to ſuppoſe that Peter had given ſome reaſon to ſuſpect his love to him, as he had really done, a few days before, by denying him thrice, with ſhocking aggravations; and with this reference the inquiry was very cutting to Peter, and no doubt made him think thus with himſelf: "Ah! it is no wonder my Lord ſhould call my love in queſtion, who ſo lately moſt ungratefully denied him." The queſtion is put to him openly, before the whole company, which might perhaps increaſe his confuſion; but it was prudently ordered, that he might declare his love to Jeſus as openly as he had denied him, and that his brethren might be ſatisfied of his ſincerity, and recovery from his late fall.

The firſt form of the queſtion implies a compariſon: *Simon, ſon of Jonas, loveſt thou me more than theſe?* that

that is, more than theſe thy fellow-diſciples? "It is not long ſince, Peter, that thou didſt declare, Though all ſhould forſake thee, yet will not I; though all my fellow-diſciples ſhould prove treacherous, yet I am determined to adhere to thee, come what will; and art thou ſtill of the ſame mind? Peter modeſtly replies, *Lord thou knoweſt that I love thee:* as much as to ſay, "Lord, I own that I have fallen more foully than any of my brethren, and I dare not ſay I love thee more than they do; I dare ſay nothing of the high degree of my love, in compariſon with others; but, Lord, I muſt aſſert the ſincerity of my love, weak as it is, and I humbly adventure to appeal to thee, who knoweſt all things, and canſt not be deceived with fair pretenſions, for the truth of my profeſſion." *

Peter, no doubt, hoped this declaration would ſatisfy his Lord. But Jeſus, after a pauſe, puts the queſtion to him again, *Simon, ſon of Jonas, loveſt thou me?* And Peter inſiſts upon his former anſwer, *Yea, Lord, thou knoweſt that I love thee.*

Now he hoped to eſcape all future queſtions upon this point. But Jeſus, as though he were ſtill ſuſpicious of him, puts it to him a third time, *Simon, ſon of Jonas, loveſt thou me?* Peter was grieved that this inquiry ſhould be put to him ſucceſſively no leſs than thrice; it cut him to the heart with the remembrance of his baſe denial of his Maſter as often, and perhaps with a fear that he would not now be convinced of his ſincerity, but was about to expoſe him as a traitor, and diſcard him. Upon this he grows warm, and replies with the moſt paſſionate vehemence, *Lord, thou knoweſt all things, thou knoweſt that I love thee.* As much as to

* Or the compariſon in the queſtion may refer to the proviſion they had juſt fed upon, and the employment they had juſt been in. Q. D. "Loveſt thou me more than thou loveſt theſe fiſh and thy fiſhing trade? Peter replies, *Yea, Lord, thou knoweſt that I love thee.* Well, ſays Chriſt, if thou doſt really love me, leave this employment, and feed my ſheep; let that be thy buſineſs for the future, and ſhew thy love to me by thy tender care of my ſheep; that is, of my church."

to ſay, "Lord, why doſt thou try me ſo often upon this point? Look only into my heart, which lies all open to thy view, and be thou judge thyſelf, whether I do not ſincerely love thee. I muſt confeſs my late conduct looked very ſuſpicious; and I reflect upon it with ſhame and ſorrow: I am unworthy to be ranked by thee among thy friends. But, Lord, unworthy as I am, and baſe and ſuſpicious as my conduct was, I muſt inſiſt upon it, that I do love thee; and it wounds me to the heart that thou ſhouldſt ſeem ſo jealous of me. I cannot give up this point; and I appeal to thyſelf for the truth of it." Jealouſy in love, my brethren, ſuſpicion among friends, is a very painful and anxious paſſion; and never ſo much ſo to a pious heart, as when the ſincerity of our love to God is the object of it. Such a perſon cannot be eaſy while a matter of ſo much importance lies under ſuſpicion, but muſt put it beyond all doubt.

And let me tell you, ſirs, this is a queſtion in which we are all moſt nearly concerned. Are our conduct and temper towards God ſo entirely and uniformly friendly and dutiful, as to put it beyond all doubt that we do truly love him? Alas! are there not many things that look very ſuſpicious in our caſe? Should Jeſus now call each of us by our names, as he did Peter, and aſk us, one by one, *Loveſt thou me?* what could we anſwer? Could we honeſtly deſire him to look into our hearts, that he might ſee that ſacred principle there? and could we produce the genuine evidences of it in our lives? My brethren, if there be an inquiry within the compaſs of human knowledge that deſerves the moſt ſolicitous attention, certainly this does. And it is my preſent deſign to aſſiſt you to come to a determination upon it. I ſay, we are now going upon this ſearch, "Do I really love the Lord Jeſus?" Come, ſirs, let us all join in it; let us all reſolve to be determined in this point before we leave this place. For this purpoſe I ſhall point out ſome plain marks of genuine love, and then, ſuppoſing that you will have

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diſcovered your real character in this reſpect, I ſhall addreſs you as divided into two different claſſes; the friends, and the enemies of Jeſus. And as love to God, and love to Jeſus Chriſt, who is God as well as man, are ſubſtantially the ſame, and cannot be ſeparated, I ſhall not nicely diſtinguiſh between them, but ſpeak upon the one or the other, as may be moſt conducive to my deſign.

1. I am to point out ſome plain, genuine marks of divine love; and theſe I ſhall derive either from plain ſcripture, or from the apparent nature and inſeparable properties of that paſſion.

I need hardly tell you, that while there is ſo much hypocriſy, flattery, and compliment in the world, a man's profeſſing the Chriſtian Religion, and a ſupreme regard to its Founder, is no certain evidence of divine love. Inſincerity and treachery, which have done ſo much miſchief in private friendſhips, and betrayed ſo many kingdoms, has diffuſed itſelf, like a malignant poiſon, into the affairs of religion; and men dare to compliment and flatter even the heart-ſearching God. Judas betrayed his Lord with an *Hail, Maſter, and a kiſs*; and his conduct before that had the appearance of friendſhip, otherwiſe the diſciples would have ſuſpected him for the traitor upon the firſt hint. Therefore there muſt be ſomething more ſubſtantial to evidence the truth of our love, than a mere profeſſion, or the external forms of religion.

Nor does true love conſiſt in a ſpeculative, languid eſteem, or a careleſs, unaffecting good opinion of Jeſus Chriſt. We may think and ſpeak highly of him, and believe very great things concerning him, while the heart is dead and cold towards him; yea, full of enmity againſt him. All this may be the effect of education, or cool reaſoning, and may hover in the head, without ſinking deep into the heart, and becoming a governing principle in practice. It is this ſpeculative good opinion of him which, I am afraid, the generality miſtake for divine love. They cannot but know that

that their hearts are habitually careleſs and indifferent towards God, that they do not feel thoſe affectionate emotions and ſtrong tendencies of ſoul towards him, which they feel towards all other objects of their love. However, when they happen to think of him, it is ſometimes with a kind of high eſteem; and this they take to be a genuine love to him, though it has no correſpondent effects upon their temper or conduct.

I may add farther, That ſome may love God upon a miſtake; that is, they love him upon ſuppoſition that he is quite another kind of being than he really is; and did they conceive of him as he is, he would appear to their depraved hearts rather an object of terror and abhorrence, than of love and delight. For example, they may ſuppoſe him ſo ſoft, eaſy, and paſſive a being, as not to reſent their rebellious conduct; ſo merciful, as hardly ever to execute juſtice upon ſinners; ſo careleſs of the honour of his law and government, as to paſs by all their diſobedience; and ſo fooliſhly fond of his creatures, as to advance them to happineſs promiſcuouſly without any regard to their moral character, or the honour of his perfections. Such a Deity as this is formed exactly according to their taſte, to encourage them in ſin, and relieve them from horrors of conſcience and the fears of futurity; and no wonder they ſhould love ſuch a Being as this, ſo like themſelves: even criminals would love a judge of this character. But this is not the true God, but the creature of their own fooliſh imaginations. This is not that God before whom the celeſtial armies cry, *Holy, holy, holy; who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity; who is a God of truth and without iniquity; juſt and right is he;* who turns the wicked into hell, and all the nations that forget God; and who will not admit one ſoul into heaven but what is made holy in temper and practice beforehand. And did they view him in this light, they would be ſo far from loving him, that their carnal minds would riſe in enmity againſt him. Now to love God upon ſuch a ſuppoſition, is not to pleaſe him, but

to

to reproach and affront him; and he resents it as the highest indignity. How would you take it, if a rake or a villain should love you upon a mistaken notion, that you were a libertine, a thief, or a liar, like himself? Would you thank him for such a friendship? No; you would esteem it the basest affront. And when you had convinced him of his mistake, his love would be turned into hatred. My brethren, we must love God for what he is, otherwise we do not love him at all. We must, therefore, know him in some measure as he is, before we can rationally love him; and particularly, we must know and delight in those perfections which are most unacceptable to guilty and depraved creatures, his justice, holiness, and infinite hatred of sin, before we can truly love him.

Having cautioned you against these plausible and popular mistakes, I now resume my purpose, and shall point out some undoubted marks of genuine and sincere love. And that I may not perplex you with too many particulars, I shall only mention these four: That it is of a divine and supernatural original—and that it produces frequent and affectionate thoughts of its object—A delight in communion with him—And an earnest study and endeavour to please him, by a life of universal obedience.

1. If you would determine this important inquiry, "Do I really love the Lord Jesus Christ?" you must previously inquire how you came by your love? whether it be the mere effect of nature, of education, or any thing within the power of man? or whether it was wrought in your hearts by the almighty power of God, after many rebellious struggles and insurrections, and a full conviction of the innate enmity of your carnal minds against him? If it be the spontaneous production of your own hearts, or of natural causes, if you have always been possessed of it, and never found it difficult to obtain or cherish it? If you have not been sensible of a supernatural power working it in you, you may be sure it is all delusion. For though the

the paſſion of love be innate in our nature, and is eaſily excited by a thouſand created beauties, yet, alas! it has no natural tendency towards God. Human nature in its preſent ſtate is ſtrangely indiſpoſed and diſaffected in this reſpect; as experience has abundantly convinced us, unleſs we have been ſtupidly unobſervant with regard to ourſelves. A ſtate of nature is uniformly repreſented in ſcripture as a ſtate of enmity againſt God. *That which is born of the fleſh is fleſh*, John iii. 6. and therefore, by nature, we are all fleſh in the ſcripture ſtyle. Now *they that are in the fleſh cannot pleaſe God*, ſays St. Paul, *becauſe the carnal mind is enmity againſt God*, &c. Rom. viii. 7, 8. The ſcriptures every where repreſent us as being ſaved in the way of reconciliation; now reconciliation ſuppoſes a previous variance and enmity. Nay, St. Paul expreſsly tells us, that *we were enemies when we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son.* Rom. v. 10. By nature we are *children of wrath*, Eph. ii. 3. and ſurely we cannot be children of wrath and lovers of God at one and the ſame time! Here then you muſt all plead guilty.—Whatever you now are, it is beyond all doubt that you were once enemies to God. It is ſufficient conviction againſt you that you are men, and belong to a race univerſally diſaffected. And now have you ever been brought out of that ſtate? if not, you are enemies to God ſtill. You could not paſs from death unto life in a dream, or an entire inſenſibility; for you muſt have experienced a great change, and you muſt have been ſenſible of, and may now recollect a great many deep and affecting ſenſations that attended it. You muſt have ſeen and been ſhocked at your diſaffection: you muſt have been brought to cry in the moſt importunate manner to God to give you a better temper, and to ſhed abroad his love in your hearts by the Holy Ghoſt. Rom. v. 5. In ſhort, you are made new creatures; old things are paſſed away, and all things are become new; and all theſe new things are of God, who hath reconciled you to himſelf. 2 Cor. v. 17, 18.

Now

Now if this be the teſt, what would you ſay to this queſtion, *Loveſt thou me?* Some of you, I truſt, could anſwer, "Lord, I am afraid of the truth of my love; but this I am ſure of, a great change hath been wrought in my ſoul. Whether I am now a ſincere lover of God or not, I am ſure I am not what I once was; not only my outward practice, but the inward temper of my heart towards thee is vaſtly altered; it is more filial, affectionate and dutiful." If any of you can advance thus far in your anſwer, my brethren, it looks comfortable, though you ſhould ſtill be jealous of yourſelves. But, ſirs, let conſcience now deal honeſtly with you; Are there not many of you who are ſtill in your natural ſtate? All your religion is an earth-born, ſelf-ſprung thing. You have never been the ſubjects of a ſupernatural work of divine grace, nor felt ſuch a great change in the temper of your minds; and if this is your caſe I muſt pronounce, that, however many amiable qualities you may be poſſeſſed of, and however fair a profeſſion you make of religion, you have not the love of God in you; for how ſhould you have it, when it is not natural to you, and when it has not been implanted in you by an operation above nature? Indeed, my brethren, if this be your caſe, you are plainly convicted this day of being deſtitute of the very firſt principle of all religion; and pray admit the conviction: you may as well expect to be men without being born, as to love God without being born again. But,

2. If we love the Lord Jeſus Chriſt in ſincerity, we frequently and affectionately think of him. This you know is the genius and tendency of love in general, to fix our thoughts upon its object; and the Pſalmiſt often mentions this as an attendant of his love to God. *How precious are the thoughts of thee unto me, O God! how great is the ſum of them! if I ſhould count them, they are more in number than the ſand; when I awake I am ſtill with thee.* Pſal. cxxxix. 17, 18. *I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night-watches.*

Pſal. lxiii. 6. *My meditation of him ſhall be ſweet.* Pſal. civ. 34. Iſaiah repreſents the whole church as ſaying, *The deſire of our ſoul is to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee: with my ſoul have I deſired thee in the night; yea, with my ſpirit within me will I ſeek thee early.* Iſa. xxvi. 8, 9. This you ſee is the character of the lovers of God. And on the other hand, his enemies are characterized as perſons who do not like to retain him in their knowledge, Rom. i. 28. *who forget God;* Pſal. ix. 17. and l. 22. *God is not in all their thoughts,* Pſal. x. 4. but they practically *ſay unto the Almighty, depart from us; we deſire not the knowledge of thy ways.* Job. xxi. 14. The thoughts of an enemy are always ungrateful, eſpecially if he is unable to avenge himſelf of his adverſaries; and the mind will turn every way to avoid them. But the thoughts of one we love, how ſweet, how welcome, how often do they return! How often does the dear image of an abſent friend riſe to the mind! and with what affectionate endearments! Unleſs you are entire ſtrangers to this generous paſſion, you know, by experience, this is the nature and tendency of love.

And do not theſe things enable ſome of you to give a comfortable anſwer to this queſtion, *Loveſt thou me?* You are often jealous of your love; but if you love him not, why do your thoughts make ſo many eager ſallies to him? Once your thoughts could dwell within the compaſs of created nature, and fly from vanity to vanity, without attempting a flight to heaven. But now do they not often break through the limits of creation, in eager ſearch after God as that ſupreme good? And with what affectionate eagerneſs do they at times dwell there! How do your ſouls delight to ſurvey and gaze at his perfections, and contemplate the wonders of his works! And how often do your thoughts hover round a crucified Jeſus, and, as it were, cling and cluſter to his croſs, like the bees round the hive! You do not indeed think of him ſo frequently, or with ſuch affectionate endearments as you ſhould. But can you

you not appeal to himſelf, that the thoughts of him are welcome to your minds; that you do at times dwell with pleaſure in the delightful contemplation, even when your hands are buſy about other things; and that it is your daily ſorrow that your hearts are not more intimate with him, and pay him more frequent viſits? Does not your experience tell you, that you cannot always let your thoughts grovel in the duſt, or run out in an endleſs chace of things below, but that, in ſome happy hours, they riſe on the wings of love, and moſt affectionately cleave to your dear Redeemer? And your thoughts are not the cold ſpeculations of a philoſopher, but the warm, paſſionate and heart-affecting thoughts of a chriſtian. If this be your caſe, my brethren, take courage. You love the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and you may be ſure he loves you, and will treat you as his friends.

But are there not many of you who may be convinced by thoſe things, that you have not the love of God in you? For are you not conſcious that your affectionate thoughts are proſtituted to ſome trifle in this lower world, and hardly ever aſpire to him? Nay, are not the thoughts of God, and things divine and eternal, unwelcome to you? and do you not caſt them out of your minds as you would ſhake a ſpark of fire from your boſoms? Do not you find yourſelves ſhy of him, and alienated from him? Do not thoſe things give you pain which would turn your thoughts towards him? You do not affect ſuch ſubjects of meditation or converſation, and you ſoon grow weary and uneaſy when your minds are tied down to them! And what can be the cauſe of this, but a ſtrong diſaffection to God, and a ſecret conſcioufneſs that he is your enemy on this account! O, ſirs, what can be more aſtoniſhing, or what can be a ſtronger evidence of enmity to God, than that men ſhould live in ſuch a world as this, and yet hardly ever have one affectionate thought of their great Author, Preſerver and Benefactor! His glory ſhines upon them from all his works, and

and meets their eye wherever they look; his word exhibits him to their view in a ſtill more bright and amiable light. It repreſents the Lord Jeſus in all the love and agonies of his crucifixion, and in all the glories of his exaltation; they are receiving mercies from him every moment of their lives; for, in him they live, and move, and have their being: their own reaſon and conſciences tell them that he is the moſt excellent and lovely being, and worthy of ſupreme and univerſal love, and they profeſs to believe it; and yet he cannot, after all, gain ſo much as their frequent and affectionate thoughts! Their thoughts, thoſe cheap and eaſy things, are ungratefully denied to him, who gave them a power of thinking! O what ſtupid indifferency about the ſupreme good, or rather what prevailing enmity is here! Can you pretend to be lovers of Jeſus Chriſt while this is your caſe? Can you excuſe or extenuate this under the ſoft name of infirmity? No, it is rank, inveterate, ſullen enmity; and a righteous God reſents it as ſuch. But,

3. If you love God and the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, you delight in communion with them. Friends, you know, delight to converſe together, to unboſom themſelves to one another, and to enjoy the freedoms of ſociety. They are fond of interviews, and ſeize every opportunity for that purpoſe; and abſence is tedious and painful to them. If you are ſo happy as to have a friend, you know by experience this is the nature of love. Now, though God be a ſpirit, and infinitely above all ſenſible converſe with the ſons of men, yet he does not keep himſelf at a diſtance from his people. He has acceſs to their ſpirits, and allows them to carry on a ſpiritual commerce with him, which is the greateſt happineſs of their lives. Hence God is ſo often ſaid, in the ſcripture, to draw near to them, and they to him, James iv. 8. Heb. vii. 19. Pſalm lxix. 18. and lxxiii. 28. Heb. x. 22. Lam. iii. 57. and St. John, ſpeaking of himſelf and his fellow-chriſtians, ſays, *Truly our fellowſhip is with the Father, and with his Son Jeſus*

Jeſus Chriſt. 1 John i. 3. This divine fellowſhip is promiſed by Chriſt to all his friends, John xiv. 21, 23. *He that loveth me, ſhall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifeſt myſelf to him;—we will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.* This myſtical fellowſhip is peculiar to the friends of God; and others know nothing of it. They are repreſented as poor ſtrangers and aliens, that have no communication with God. Eph. ii. 12. Col. i. 21. He is ſhy of them and they of him: they keep at a diſtance from one another, like perſons diſaffected.—This communion on God's part conſiſts in his communicating to his people the influences of his grace, to quicken them, to inflame their love, to give them filial boldneſs in drawing near to him, in aſſuring them of his love to them, and repreſenting himſelf to them as reconciled and acceſſable. And on their part it conſiſts in a liberty of heart and ſpeech in pouring out their prayers to him, a delightful freedom of ſpirit in all exerciſes of devotion, in returning him love for love, and dedicating themſelves to him. Thus there is a kind of interchange of thoughts and affections, mutual freedoms and endearments, between them. And O! how divinely ſweet in ſome happy hours of ſacred intimacy! This indeed is heaven upon earth: and, might it but continue without interruption, the life of a lover of God would be a conſtant ſeries of pure, unmingled happineſs. But, alas! at times their Beloved withdraws himſelf, and goes from them, and then they languiſh, and pine away, and mourn, like the mourning turtle that has loſt his mate. This intercourſe with God may be a ſtrange thing to ſome of you; and to vindicate the want of it, you may give it ſome odious name; enthuſiaſm, fanaticiſm, or heated imagination. But I muſt tell you, if you know nothing of it, your temper and experience is entirely different from all the friends of God, and, therefore, you cannot rank yourſelves in that happy number.

Now

Now the ordinances of the gospel are, as it were, the places of interview, where God and his people meet, and where they indulge those sacred freedoms. It is in prayer, in meditation, in reading or hearing his word, in communicating at his table; it is in these and the like exercises that God communicates, and, as it were, unbosoms himself to those that love him; and they enjoy the freedom of children and friends with him: and on this account they delight in those ordinances, and take pleasure in attending upon them. The workings of their hearts in this respect, you may discover in David, when, by the persecution of Saul, or the rebellion of his son Absalom, he was banished from the stated ordinances of public worship. Psal. xlii. 1, 2, 4. and lxxxiv. throughout, and xxvii. 4.

And now, my brethren, to come nearer home, have not some of you experienced the sacred joys of communion with God? And were not those the sweetest hours of your life? Have you not found it good for you to draw near to him? And when he has withdrawn his presence, how have you languished and mourned, and could never be easy till he was pleased to return to you? Do you not also find a sacred pleasure in the institutions of the gospel, because there you hope to meet your God, and enjoy communion with him? Is this the principle that prompts you to pray, to hear, and perform every religious duty? Then you may appeal to a heart-searching God, *Lord, thou knowest that I love thee.*

But does not this view of the matter give the conscience of some of you reason to condemn you. You have neither known nor desired this fellowship with the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ. Alas! you know nothing of those freedoms of divine friendship: and you have no prevailing pleasure in devotion. You either neglect the duties of religion, or else you perform them from custom, education, constraint of conscience, or some other such principle. Let me point out one instance as a specimen; and that is secret prayer and closet-

cloſet-devotion. Nothing can be more expreſsly commanded than this is by Chriſt, Matt. vi. 6. and is this your daily practice? Is this the moſt pleaſant exerciſe of your life? Or is it a mere formality, or a wearineſs to you? My brethren, inquire honeſtly into this matter.

4. And laſtly, If you love the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, you earneſtly ſtudy and endeavour to pleaſe him by a life of univerſal obedience. Love is always deſirous to pleaſe the perſon beloved; and it will naturally lead to a conduct that is pleaſing. This, then, you may be ſure of, that if you love Jeſus, it is the labour of your life to pleaſe him. The grand inquiry with you is not, Will this or that pleaſe men? will it pleaſe myſelf? or will it promote my intereſt? but, will it pleaſe my God and Saviour? If not, I will have nothing to do with it. This is the ſtanding rule of your practice: Let others conſult their own inclinations, or the taſte of the age; let them conſult their own ſecular intereſt, or the applauſe of mortals; you conſult what is the good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God. Rom. xii. 2. See alſo Eph. vi. 6. 1 Pet. iii. 17. Heb. xiii. 21. and if you may but pleaſe him, it is enough. But are there not ſome of you who are hardly ever concerned with this dutiful ſolicitude? If you can but pleaſe yourſelves, and thoſe whoſe favour you would court, if you can but promote your own intereſt, you are not ſolicitous whether you pleaſe God, or not. This proves you deſtitute of his love.

The only way to pleaſe God, and the beſt teſt of your love to him, is obedience to his commandments. This is made the deciſive mark by Chriſt himſelf. *If a man love me, he will keep my words—He that loveth me not, keepeth not my ſayings.* John xiv. 23, 24.—He repeats it over and over in different forms: *He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me.* ver. 21. *If ye love me, keep my commandments.* ver. 15. *Ye are my friends, if ye do whatſoever I command you.* John xv. 14. *This is the love of God,* ſays St. John; that

that is, it is the ſureſt evidence, and the natural, inſeparable effect of your love of God, *that you keep his commandments; and his commandments are not grievous*, 1 John v. 3. that is, they will not ſeem grievous to one that obeys them from the generous principle of love.

Here then, you that profeſs to love the Lord Jeſus, here is an infallible teſt for your love. Do you make it the great ſtudy of your life to keep his commandments? Do you honeſtly endeavour to perform every duty he has enjoined, and that becauſe he has enjoined it? And do you vigorouſly reſiſt and ſtruggle againſt every ſin, however conſtitutional, however faſhionable, however gainful, becauſe he forbids it? And is the way of obedience pleaſant to you? Would you chooſe this way to heaven rather than any other, if it were left to your election? What does conſcience anſwer to this? Do not ſome of you ſtumble and heſitate here? If you ſhould ſpeak the truth, you muſt ſay, "I cannot but confeſs that I do wilfully indulge myſelf in ſome things which Jeſus has forbidden, and leave unattempted ſome duties which he has commanded?" Alas! is this the caſe? Then his love does not dwell in you: you are undeniably his enemies, whatever be your pretenſions. But if you can ſay, "Lord, I own that in many things I offend; in many things I come ſhort of my duty; but, if I know myſelf, I think, I can honeſtly declare, that it is my ſincere and earneſt deſire to do thy will, and that it is my real endeavour in every inſtance in which it is made known to me;" I ſay, if you can make this declaration, your caſe looks encouraging: this is the dutiful temper and modeſt language of genuine love.

And now, my brethren, if Jeſus ſhould put this queſtion to each of you, *Loveſt thou me?* Are you prepared to anſwer him? Can you deſire more plain, or more certain evidences than have been given? Surely, no; and therefore, if you are ſtill quite undetermined, it is owing to the real obſcurity and perplexity of your caſe,

caſe, or to your careleſſneſs and inattention, or to your wilfully ſhutting your eyes againſt conviction. My brethren, if you have theſe characteriſtics of love to Jeſus, away with your painful jealouſies, and believe that your hearts are upright before him. But if you are deſtitute of them, be aſſured you are equally deſtitute of his love. Love can never be ſeparated from its natural fruits and effects; and therefore, without theſe, it is the greateſt abſurdity to pretend to it. Can you riſe up now, and tell the Lord Jeſus to his face, "Lord, it is true, I have not the fruits and evidences of love, but I love thee notwithſtanding; I love thee above all, though I have no frequent affectionate thoughts of thee; I love thee, though I hate to think of thee; though I have no pleaſure in converſing with thee, nor any concerns to pleaſe thee, and keep thy commandments; that is, I love thee, though my temper and conduct towards thee be thoſe of an enemy!" Alas! ſirs, will you preſume to impoſe upon an omniſcient God, with ſuch abſurd contradictory pretenſions as theſe? Would ſuch a love as this paſs current among men: Offer it now to your governor, your father, or your friend, and ſee if they will accept of it. Tell your friend, "I moſt ſincerely love you, though I do not love to think of you, or converſe with you: I love you, though I care not whether I pleaſe you!" would he not diſcard you from his friendſhip, as an inconſiſtent pretender, and highly reſent it, that you ſhould think to impoſe upon him by ſuch abſurd pretenſions? And ſhall that paſs for ſincere, ſupreme love to God, which would not be accepted as common friendſhip among men? Shall enmity, diſguiſed under hypocritical pretenſions, be offered to him, under the name of friendſhip? With horror I mention it; and yet I muſt mention it, that you may be ſhocked at your conduct? do you think he wants underſtanding to be thus impoſed upon? It is a plain caſe you have not the leaſt ſpark of true love to him; you are enemies to him in your minds, by wicked works, there-

fore paſs ſentence upon yourſelves; "Here is a ſoul ſo perverſe and wicked, that it has never yet loved its divine Parent and the ſupreme excellency; has never loved the bleſſed Jeſus, the Friend of ſinners." And now, ſhould all the enemies of God in this aſſembly walk to one ſide, and crowd together by themſelves, how thin would they leave this congregation? How few would be left behind! Well, the day is coming, when you muſt be ſeparated, as a ſhepherd divides the ſheep from the goats. To the left hand, ſinners, to the left hand of your Judge, you muſt go, who continue deſtitute of his love. Then you will know the truth of your caſe; but alas! it will be too late to correct it. But now the diſcovery of it is the firſt ſtep towards the amendment of it: and therefore, let your conſciences now anticipate the proceedings of the great judgment-day, and draw a line of ſeparation betwixt you, that I may addreſs you according to the claſſes in which you are found. This leads me, purſuant to my propoſed method,

II. To addreſs myſelf to you who have now diſcovered that you are ſincere lovers of Jeſus Chriſt, notwithſtanding your many imperfections. And my time will allow me to offer only two things to you.

The one is, your heaven is ſure! I repeat it again, your heaven is ſure! as ſure as the ſincerity of your love. Love is the grand qualification for the enjoyment of God. You can be happy in his preſence, becauſe you love him: happy in his ſervice, becauſe you love him: happy in the contemplation of his glories, becauſe you love him. In ſhort, love renders you fit for heaven, and all its employments and fruitions, and therefore you ſhall certainly be admitted there; for God never will exclude one ſoul that is fit for it, or that could reliſh the happineſs there. Love is the ſubſtance of all religion and obedience: love is the fulfilling of the law; and that love you have in your hearts. O happy ſouls, "rejoice in hope of the glory of God:" for, as the apoſtle reaſons, *your hope will not make you aſhamed,*

aſhamed, becauſe the love of God is ſhed abroad in your hearts by the Holy Ghoſt. Rom. v. 4, 5. Love is an immortal principle. *Charity*, or love, *never faileth.* 1 Cor. xiii. 8. It is therefore, not only your privilege, but your duty to rejoice: and how can you refrain, when in a few years, at moſt, you will be with that Jeſus whom you love unſeen, in all the glories, and in all the felicities of the heavenly world!

The other thing I would mention to you is, alas! how faint, how imperfect is your love! And what great reaſon have you to cheriſh it, and labour to raiſe it into a vigorous flame? I need not offer much for your conviction on this head; for alas! you cannot but be ſenſible your love bears no ſuitable proportion to the excellency of the divine nature, the dying love of Jeſus, and your obligations to him. Alas! it is but a feeble ſpark, and ſometimes ſo buried and ſuffocated under the weight of your corruptions, that you can hardly diſcern it at all, and fear it is entirely extinguiſhed. O then, I beſeech you, love your God more; love your dear Redeemer more. Do not affront him with ſuch a languid love: think over his excellencies, his relations to you, his unbounded love and grace to you; and theſe conſiderations may fire your hearts, cold as they are. Cry to him to kindle the ſacred flame in your breaſt, and avoid every thing that tends to damp it: guard againſt the friendſhip of this world, which is enmity againſt God; and againſt all the workings of ſin: avoid all cauſes of variance and diſtance between God and you, and labour to maintain a ſettled peace and a conſtant correſpondence. But the other claſs of my hearers ſtand in greater need of immediate relief, and therefore,

III. I ſhall addreſs myſelf to ſuch of you as may have diſcovered, by this day's trial, that you are deſtitute of the love of Chriſt: and what I have to ſay to you, my dear fellow mortals, may be reduced under two heads, your ſin and danger—and the moſt proper means of deliverance.

To

To convince you of your ſin and danger in not loving God and his Son Jeſus Chriſt, conſider,

1. It is the ſupreme excellency that you have refuſed to love. The moſt venerable Majeſty, the moſt conſummate wiſdom, the moſt rich goodneſs and grace, the moſt amiable juſtice; theſe are the things you diſaffect, while you are diſaffected towards God; for theſe are his very nature. You neglect and diſguſt faithfulneſs, candour, veracity, mercy, benevolence, and every moral beauty in the higheſt perfection. You are enemies to the origin, the ſum total of all excellency. Now this may ſtrike you with conviction in various views—as firſt, how depraved and corrupt muſt your ſouls be, that can be diſaffected to ſuch a glorious object? How muſt your taſte be vitiated, that cannot reliſh the ſupreme good? You can love the faint ſhadows of theſe perfections in your fellow-creatures; you can love generoſity, benevolence, mercy, juſtice, and ſuch virtues, in mortals, and may you not fall down overwhelmed with aſtoniſhment, and cry out, "Lord, what is this that has befallen my ſoul, that I cannot love thee? that I can love any thing elſe that is lovely, and yet cannot love thee? O! what a perverſe, depraved, abominable ſoul is this!" Sirs, muſt you not be ſhocked to think you have ſuch ſouls within you? If your bodies were all over-run with rotten ulcers; if your features were all convulſed and diſtorted into the moſt hideous forms; if your limbs were all ſhattered and diſlocated; if your taſte were ſo vitiated that you loathed all healthful food, and you ſhould crawl upon the earth, feeding on its mire and dirt; all this would not render you half ſo odious and horrible a monſter as a ſoul diſaffected towards God. Again, What an aggravated wickedneſs muſt this be? Your obligations to love him are juſt in proportion to his lovelineſs and excellency; and the wickedneſs of breaking theſe obligations is in exact proportion to their ſtrength. And as his excellency and your obligations are infinite, your wickedneſs

neſs in not loving him muſt be ſo too. What illuſtration ſhall I uſe to repreſent this crime in its proper infernal colours? If you ſhould commence an enemy to the whole creation; proſecute men and angels with implacable abhorrence; deteſt the father that begat you, and the breaſts that gave you ſuck; nay, if you ſhould commence a direct enemy to yourſelf, be perpetually plotting againſt your own life, all this would not equal the crime of hating the ever-bleſſed God; for all theſe beings together have no excellency compared to him, and your obligation to love him is prior and fundamental to all others. Here your love ſhould begin, here it ſhould centre, and then extend its lines to all parts of the circle of creation; therefore, no more plead your innocence. If you had never committed one ſin beſide in all your life, this one of not loving God is ſufficient to condemn you for ever to the loweſt hell.—Further, This ſin will appear more aggravated, if you conſider that, by not loving God, you do in the ſtrongeſt manner declare, that he has not theſe excellencies, but is a worthleſs Being, undeſerving of your love. When you do not love him, after all the diſcoveries he has made of himſelf to you, it is plain that this is the habitual ſenſe of your hearts, that he has no excellency worthy of your love. This is the language of your hearts; and this language is much more ſtrong and expreſſive than that of your lips. You may ſpeak things inadvertently, which your ſecond thoughts would retract; but by being all your life deſtitute of the love of God, you have all your life been declaring that you look upon him as a worthleſs Being, far inferior to a thouſand things upon earth, to which you have given your love. Now you would not dare to utter ſuch blaſphemy as this, and how can you dare to declare it, much more ſtrongly by the temper of your hearts, and ſtand to it as a truth? O! will you never retract it by becoming a lover of God? My brethren, can you imagine a more ſhocking, inſolent wickedneſs than this?

this? And what an hateful ſoul muſt that be that has been guilty of it all its days! What is this but to ſay, with the atheiſtic fool, No God? for he is not God, if he be not ſupremely excellent and amiable? and if you wiſh there were no God, what do you do but wiſh univerſal deſolation, and imprecate deſtruction to yourſelf, and every other being? for were there no God, there could be nothing elſe; there would not have been one ſpark of being through infinite ſpace in any point of duration.

2. Your not loving God is a moſt unnatural wickedneſs. He is your Father; and that in a higher ſenſe than your earthly parents can be. He is the Author of your bodies, becauſe it was he that firſt eſtabliſhed, and ſtill continues in force, thoſe laws of generation, by which they were produced; and had it not been for this, men could no more produce one another than a ſtone or a clod of earth. As to your ſouls, the nobler part of your perſons, they are his immediate offspring, produced by him without the inſtrumentality of ſecondary cauſes, of any pre-exiſtent materials. Thus he is your Father in the higheſt ſenſe; and yet you have not loved him! You have not loved him who gave you the power of love! You have not loved him from whoſe creative hands you came a few years ago! What an unnatural wickedneſs is this! What were you an hundred years ago? You were nothing; and you would have continued ſo to all eternity, had he not ſpoke you into being. And yet you have not ſincerely loved him to this moment! Moſt aſtoniſhing! Muſt you not tremble at and abominate yourſelves as the vileſt and moſt unnatural monſters? Should the child that received his being from you in a ſubordinate ſenſe, the child you dandled upon your knees, and for whom you are now laborioufly making proviſion, ſhould he hate the ſight of you, ſhun your company, and do nothing to pleaſe you, how would you take it? Would you not think the unnatural miſcreant unworthy of life? And yet thus you have treated your heavenly

heavenly Father, to whom you were under much higher, and more endearing obligations. You have treated him as only a deſpiſed broken idol, in whom you could take no pleaſure. And are you pleaſed with yourſelves notwithſtanding? ſhall not ſuch a ſhocking prodigy, at which angels gaze with horror, be ſtruck with horror at itſelf?—Should all the world treat God as you have done, what would be the conſequence? Why, there would not be one lover of God to be found among all the numerous race of man. And yet, if you have a right to hate him, they have too. Have you any peculiar indulgence in this caſe? Can you produce an exemption from that univerſal law, *Thou ſhalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart?* &c. You ſee then whither your conduct leads, and do you not ſhudder to think of it? And can you imagine yourſelves innocent ſtill? Do you think you have tolerably good hearts for all? I am ſure your reaſon, if it be not entirely loſt, will not allow you to think ſo.

3. This is a moſt ungrateful wickedneſs. Think what God has done for you; how many mercies he has given you, as many mercies as moments; think how many deliverances he has wrought for you; ſee what a well-furniſhed world he has formed for your accommodation.—Think, O think, of the love and ſufferings of Jeſus; ſee the abaſement, the labours, the hardſhips of his life; ſee the agonies of his crucifixion; ſee the crown of thorns, the mangled viſage, the diſjointed limbs, the flowing blood, the burſting heart, the dying pangs of your bleſſed Redeemer. O! think upon, and view theſe things, and then ſay, what do you think of your enmity againſt him after all this? Can ingratitude riſe to a higher pitch? O! is this your return for all the kindneſs of God? for all the love of Jeſus? There was ſomething very cutting in his queſtion to the Jews, *Many good works have I done among you.* I have never provoked you by any thing but good works; *and for which of theſe do you ſtone me?* John x. 32. This may be eaſily accommodated to

you.

you. Many kind actions has he done to you, many grievous ſufferings has he undergone for you; and for which of theſe do you hate him? O muſt not ſuch an expoſtulation wound you to the heart, and melt you down at his feet in the deepeſt repentance? O! can you continue enemies to the very croſs of Chriſt? Muſt not that diſarm your reſentment, and diſſolve your hearts, hard as they are, into the moſt tender love?

4. This is a moſt comprehenſive wickedneſs. You are repeatedly told, that love is the fulfilling of the law. Rom. xiii. 8, 10. James xi. 8. The firſt and great commandment upon which (with a like precept with regard to our neighbour) the whole law and the prophets depend, is, *Thou ſhalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart*, &c. that is, love is the root, the principle, the ſubſtance of all obedience, becauſe it conſtrains a man to a cheerful obſervance of every divine precept, and naturally diſpoſes him to a dutiful conduct. Now if love be the fulfilling of the whole law, it follows, that the want of love is the breach of the whole law: it is daſhing the two tables of the law in pieces at once. As love is the principle of all obedience, ſo enmity is the principle of all diſobedience; and while this reigns in your hearts, it diffuſes a deadly poiſon through every thing you do; and you cannot perform one action acceptable to God. All your endeavours are but the treacherous flattery of an enemy, or the forced homage of a rebel obliged to feign ſubmiſſion. In ſhort, the want of love to God is the want of every thing that is morally good: it is the root of all evil; it is a complication of all wickedneſs; a ſummary, nay, I may ſay, the ſum total of all diſobedience and rebellion. And can you any longer build your hopes on the fewneſs or ſmallneſs of your ſins? Alas! while you are poſſeſſed of this temper, your hearts are full of every evil. This renders not only your actions, your words, and thoughts of every kind, guilty and vile, but the ſtated, ſettled bent and diſpoſition

poſition of your minds, moſt wicked and abominable.* And muſt you not fall on your faces before your injured Sovereign, and cry, Guilty, guilty?—But,

5. This is a moſt inexcuſable wickedneſs. Your mouth muſt be ſtopped, and you have no plea left to excuſe or extenuate it. You cannot plead here, as you do in ſome other things, "There are ſo many different denominations in the world, ſo many different opinions about religion, that I know not what to chooſe;" for here, as I told you, all are agreed. They are all unanimous in this, that love to God is eſſential to religion. Not only all denominations of Chriſtians, but Jews, Mahometans, Heathens, and all that believe the exiſtence of a God, confeſs this. And are you of a religion that does not include the love of God in it? It is the religion of devils, or rather it is the moſt diabolical irreligion. I inſiſt the more boldly upon this point, becauſe it is a catholic truth, free from all ſuſpicion of party. You cannot plead that you have no time for the exerciſe of love to God; for love is not the work of the hands, but of the heart; and may be performed while you are engaged in other buſineſs. Can you not think affectionately of a friend behind a counter, or over a plough? So you might love God, and yet follow your daily employments.—Nor can you excuſe yourſelves from your inability; for God has implanted the paſſion of love in your nature, and you find it eaſy to love other things: you can love the world, you can love a child or a friend, and why cannot you love God? The act of love is the ſame in both caſes, and one would think it would be an eaſier thing for you to love him who is the Supreme Excellence, than imperfect creatures, whoſe excellency is limited, or mingled with many hateful qualities.—Whence then is your inability in this caſe? It is nothing elſe but the ſtrength of your enmity; that is,

* When the omniſcient God views you aſleep, when all the powers of action are ſuſpended, what can he ſay of you but this, "Here lies an enemy of God?"

you are ſo diſaffected to the ever-bleſſed God, that you cannot love him; and does this leſſen your crime? Do the inveteracy and rancour of your enmity excuſe it? Alas! that is its moſt dreadful aggravation. O! how wicked muſt you be when you are ſo diſaffected to the God that made you, and the Saviour that died for you, that you cannot prevail upon your hearts to love him! Farther, Have you tried what can be done to root out and ſubdue this enmity by the power of the Holy Spirit? Have you cried to God in earneſt prayer, and uſed all means for that end? If not, it is plain you are an enemy to God, and love to continue ſo: you hate him, and practically inſiſt upon it you do right. Nor can you pretend ignorance in this caſe; for your own conſcience tells you, it is your duty to love God. In ſhort, you are intirely inexcuſable: you ſin againſt the full conviction of your own minds, and you muſt join with God, angels and men, in your own condemnation.

6. This temper, if it continue, will certainly exclude you from the kingdom of heaven. Alas! what would you do there with your diſaffected hearts?—Heaven would be an enemy's country to you. What pleaſure could you have in the ſociety or ſervice of that God whom you hate? in thoſe exerciſes and enjoyments for which you have no reliſh? Could you be happy in the practice of eternal flattery, bowing and ſinging inſincere complimental praiſes to an enemy? Could you affect the ſociety there? There is not one like you in all that innumerable aſſembly: they all love that God whom you diſguſt. And with what pleaſure could you mingle among them? How could you live in a country where the laws, the cuſtoms, the employments, the diſpoſition of the inhabitants, are all contrary to your temper? O! you need no ſentence from your Judge to exclude you, you would exclude yourſelves, and chooſe to mingle with your fellow-devils:—Which leads me to add,

7. This

7. This temper, if it continue, will certainly lead you to hell. You are fit for no other place. Where ſhould the enemies of God be, but in an infernal priſon? There is the ſame propriety in it as in ſhutting up madmen in bedlam, or rebels in a dungeon. Why, you are devilized already; you have the very temper of devils: enmity to God is the grand conſtituent of a devil; the worſt ingredient in that infernal compoſition; and this you have in your hearts, and, as it were, incorporated with your habitual temper. And what do you think will become of you? Judge yourſelves, muſt you not be doomed to that everlaſting fire, which was prepared for the devil and his angels, whom you reſemble?

Here I muſt ſubjoin, that if ever you are brought to love God, it muſt be in this world. In heaven and hell no new diſpoſitions are planted; but thoſe that are found prevalent in the ſoul will ripen and grow to perfection. None begin to grow wicked in hell, or to love God in heaven: the ſeeds are all ſown in the preſent ſtate, which then ſpring up to maturity. Therefore, if you would ever have the love of God ſhed abroad in your hearts, now, now is the time; now or never.

But, "What means (you will ſay) ſhall I uſe for this purpoſe?"—Here I muſt be but ſhort: but if you are really in earneſt, you will eaſily underſtand the ſhorteſt hints.

1. Labour to be deeply ſenſible of the aggravated ſinfulneſs and danger of your preſent ſtate. Deeply impreſs your minds with this. Check the levity of your minds, and indulge a ſerious, anxious, ſorrowful temper; for your caſe really requires it.

2. Be deeply ſenſible of the neceſſity of divine grace to change your hearts, and inſpire you with divine love. The diſeaſe is ſo far gone, you cannot heal yourſelves; but, bleſſed be God, He is able, He is able to make ſuch an enemy as you his hearty friend and dutiful ſubject. Therefore,

3. Betake

3. Betake yourſelves to earneſt prayer; and confeſs your guilt, your vileneſs, your liableneſs to divine diſpleaſure: cry for his Spirit to ſhed abroad his love in your hearts: here let your petitions centre; for this is the main thing. Endeavour to devote yourſelves to him, to give up your diſaffected hearts to him, to bow that rebellious ſoul at his feet.

4. Meditate upon the glory of God, his kindneſs to you, the love and ſufferings of Chriſt, and ſuch ſubjects as tend to beget and inflame your love to him.

5. Be not weary in the uſe of theſe means, but perſevere, hold on, until you find a thorough change produced in your hearts. Your eternal All is concerned; therefore be not remiſs and careleſs; be not ſoon tired or diſcouraged. Never give over until your laſt breath; and who knows but that hoſtile ſpirit of yours may ſoon become the friend of God, and at length ſhine among His celeſtial friends in all their tranſcendent glories and ineffable and eternal felicity! Amen.

SERMON XLVIII.

THE *NATURE* AND *AUTHOR* OF *REGENERATION.*

JOHN iii. 7. *Marvel not that I ſaid unto thee, Ye muſt be born again.*

THOSE doctrines are not always moſt abſurd in themſelves, nor ſtrange to a well-informed mind, which are moſt wondered at in the world. Ignorance is apt to wonder, where knowledge diſcovers nothing amazing or unaccountable. To ſupport our obſervations, proofs might be given; but it is to my preſent purpoſe to take notice of only one, one that excited from

from Nicodemus wonder, about 1700 years ago, and is ſtill wondered at; nay, more, is ridiculed in an ignorant world: I mean the doctrine of Regeneration, or the New Birth.

Nicodemus comes to Chriſt with a conviction of his high character as a Teacher from God, who atteſted his commiſſion by the ſtrong and popular evidence of miracles. From ſuch a Teacher he expects ſublime inſtructions; and from his own improvements in Jewiſh learning, he, no doubt, flatters himſelf he ſhall be able to comprehend them: but when, inſtead of gratifying his curioſity by telling him ſtrange and great things of the kingdom of the Meſſiah, as a ſecular Prince, and a mighty Conqueror, as he and his countrymen expected, or diſcourſing like a Rabbi on the Jewiſh law; I ſay, when, inſtead of this, Jeſus opens the conference by a ſolemn and authoritative declaration of the neceſſity of ſomething under the name of another birth, how is Nicodemus ſurprized! This he cannot underſtand. This ſeems ſtrange, new doctrine to him; and he has an objection ready againſt it, as an abſurdity and an impoſſibility: *How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the ſecond time into his mother's womb and be born?* This objection, which was altogether impertinent, and founded upon a groſs miſtaken notion of the doctrine, may ſerve as a ſpecimen of all the objections that have been made againſt this doctrine ever ſince; they have all proceeded from ignorance, or from groſs miſtaken notions of an evident truth; and hence men have imagined, like this maſter of Iſrael, that they reaſoned ſtrongly againſt it, when in reality they were ſaying nothing at all to the purpoſe, and did not ſo much as underſtand the caſe.

Our condeſcending Lord took a great deal of pains to give Nicodemus right notions of this doctrine. For this purpoſe he preſents it before him in various views. He tells him, he did not mean a ſecond natural birth, but a birth of water and of the ſpirit—a birth that renders a man ſpiritual, and conſequently fit for that

ſpiritual

ſpiritual kingdom he was about to erect; and that the free and ſovereign Spirit of God, the Author of this new birth, operated like *the wind, which bloweth where it liſteth.* Nicodemus ſtill continues gazing at him, and wondering what he ſhould mean. He is puzzled, after all, and aſks, *How can theſe things be?* Jeſus tells him the wonder did not lie in the doctrine, but in his ignorance of it, when he was a teacher of the law: *Art thou a maſter in Iſrael, and knoweſt not theſe things!*

The connection of my text is this: *That which is born of the fleſh is fleſh; and that which is born of the ſpirit is ſpirit: therefore marvel not that I ſaid unto thee, ye muſt be born again.* That is to ſay, "The doctrine you are ſo much ſurprized at, is not at all abſurd, ſo as to make you wonder to hear it from my mouth. You cannot but know, that all mankind are born of the fleſh; that is, propagated in a way that communicates a depraved nature to them; and hence, they are fleſh; that is, corrupt and carnal, and therefore wholly unfit to be admitted into my kingdom, which is pure and ſpiritual. But that which is born of the Spirit is ſpirit; that is, ſpiritual and holy; and therefore fit for that ſpiritual and holy kingdom which I am come to ſet up. Now, if this be the caſe, you have certainly no need to marvel at this doctrine: can it ſeem ſtrange to you, that impure, unholy creatures muſt be changed, before they can be fit members of ſo holy a ſociety? Can you marvel at this? No; you would have more reaſon to marvel at the contrary."

It is one part of my deſign to-day to inquire, whether the doctrine of the new birth be indeed ſuch a ſtrange, abſurd, or impoſſible thing in itſelf, as to deſerve that amazement, and indeed contempt, which it generally meets with in the world: or whether it be not rational, neceſſary, and worthy of univerſal acceptance? But before I enter upon this, it will be proper to inquire,

What the new birth is? And,

Who is the author of it?

And in what way does he generally produce it?

Remove

Remove your prejudices, my hearers, againſt this doctrine, ſuſpend your diſbelief, and ceaſe to wonder at, or ridicule it, till theſe points be explained, leſt you be found to ſpeak evil of the things you know not.

I. Let us inquire, What it is to be born again?

To gain your attention to this inquiry, I need only put you in mind, that whatever be meant by the new birth, it is not an inſignificant ſpeculation, not the diſputed peculiarity of a party, not the attainment of a few good men of the firſt claſs, but it is eſſential to every good man, and abſolutely neceſſary to ſalvation. You cannot doubt of this, if you look upon Jeſus Chriſt as a perſon of common veracity, and worthy of credit in his moſt ſolemn declarations; for he has declared, over and over again, with the utmoſt ſolemnity, that *Except a man be born again, he cannot ſee the kingdom of heaven.* John iii. 3, 5, and 7. Attend then, if you think your eternal ſalvation worthy of your attention.

The phraſe, *to be born again*, like moſt other expreſſions uſed upon divine ſubjects, is metaphorical, and brings in natural things, with which we are familiarly acquainted, to aſſiſt our conceptions of divine things, which might otherwiſe be above our comprehenſion. We all know what it is to be born; and our knowledge of this may help us to underſtand what it is to be born again. As by our firſt birth we become men, or partake of human nature; ſo, by our ſecond birth we become chriſtians, and are made partakers of a divine and ſpiritual nature. As our firſt birth introduces us into this world, and into human ſociety, ſo our ſecond birth introduces us into the church of Chriſt, and makes us true members of that holy ſociety. As by our firſt birth we reſemble our parents, at leaſt in the principal lineaments of human nature; ſo by our ſecond birth we are made partakers of the divine nature; that is, we are made to reſemble the bleſſed God in holineſs; or, as St. Paul expreſſes it, *we are renewed after his image in knowledge, righteouſneſs, and true holineſs.* Eph. iv. 24. Col. iii. 10. The effect is like

like its cauſe; the child like the parent. *That which is born of the fleſh is fleſh; and that which is born of the ſpirit is ſpirit.* * In our firſt birth we are endowed with child-like and filial diſpoſitions towards our human parents; and when we are born of God, we are inſpired with a child-like and filial temper towards him, as our heavenly Father. By our natural birth we are placed in an imperfect, but growing ſtate. We have all the powers of human nature, though none of them in perfection; but from that time they grow and improve, till they at length arrive to maturity. In like manner, in our ſecond birth, all the principles of virtue and grace are implanted; but their growth and improvement is the work of the chriſtian life; and from that time they continue gradually growing, tho' with many interruptions, till at death they arrive at maturity and perfection. In our natural birth we paſs through a very great change. The infant that had lain in darkneſs, breathleſs and almoſt inſenſible, and with little more than a vegetative life, enters into a new ſtate, feels new ſenſations, craves a new kind of nouriſhment, and diſcovers new powers. In like manner, in the ſecond birth, the ſinner paſſes through a great change; a change as to his view of divine things; as to his temper, his practice, and his ſtate; a change ſo great, that he may with propriety be denominated another man, or a new creature. As I ſhall adjuſt my diſcourſe to the narrow limits of an hour, I muſt paſs over, or but ſlightly touch upon all the particulars ſuggeſted by the metaphor in my text, except the laſt, which is the moſt comprehenſive and inſtructive; namely, That the new birth implies a great change in the views, the temper, the practice, and the ſtate of the ſinner; and under this head, ſundry of the other particulars may be reduced.

The various forms of expreſſion, which the ſcripture uſes to repreſent what is here called a ſecond birth,

* Fleſh of fleſh, and ſpirit of ſpirit. This is according to the eſtabliſhed laws of generation, by which every thing begets its like.

birth, all conſpire to teach us, that it conſiſts in a great change. It is repreſented as a reſurrection, or a change from death to life: *You hath he quickened*, ſaith St. Paul, *who were dead in treſpaſſes and ſins.* Eph. ii. 1. It is repreſented as a new creation: *If any man be in Chriſt*, ſays the ſame inſpired author, *he is a new creature: old things are paſt away; and behold, all things are become new.* 2 Cor. v. 17. *Put on*, ſays he, *the new man, which, after God, is created in righteouſneſs and true holineſs.* Eph. iv. 24. Theſe and like expreſſions ſignify a very great change: and ſuch forms of ſpeech are very commonly uſed in the ſame ſenſe; which ſhews they are ſo far from being ridiculous, that they are agreeable to the common ſenſe of mankind. When we ſee a man that we once knew, look, and ſpeak, and act as he uſed to do, it is cuſtomary to ſay, "He is the old man ſtill." But if we ſee a great alteration in his appearance, his temper, or behaviour, we are apt to ſay, "He is a new man;" or, "He is quite another creature." When we ſee a rugged, boiſterous man become meek and inoffenſive, we are apt to ſay, "He is become a mere child." Theſe forms of ſpeech are ſo ſignificant and popular, that they have even paſſed into proverbs, and that in various countries and languages; and hence they are uſed in the ſcriptures as plain and familiar repreſentations of this great truth. And hence we are bold to uſe them, in ſpite of that ſenſeleſs ridicule and contempt, which ſome would caſt upon them; but which rebounds upon themſelves, for cenſuring modes of expreſſion that are not only ſacred, but agreeable to common ſenſe.

Now, ſince it is evident the new birth ſignifies a great change, you are impatient, by this time, I hope, to know more particularly what it is. It is the change of a thoughtleſs, ignorant, hard-hearted, rebellious ſinner, into a thoughtful, well-informed, tender-hearted, dutiful ſervant of God. It is the implantation of the ſeeds or principles of every grace and virtue in a heart that was entirely deſtitute of them, and full of ſin.

The ſinner that was wont to have no practical affectionate regard for the great God, is now made to revere, admire, and love him, as the greateſt and beſt of Beings; to rejoice in him as his ſupreme happineſs, and cheerfully to ſubmit to him as his Ruler. Formerly his temper and conduct would better agree to the infidelity of an atheiſt than to the faith of a chriſtian: but now, he thinks, and ſpeaks, and acts, as one that really believes there is a God; a God who inſpects all his ways, and will call him to an account. The heart that was wont to diſguſt the holineſs of the divine law, and murmur at the ſtrictneſs of its precepts, now loves it; loves it for that very reaſon for which it was wont to hate it; namely, becauſe it is ſo holy. This was the temper of the Pſalmiſt: *Thy word is very pure; therefore* (that is, on that very account) *thy ſervant loveth it*, Pſal. cxix. 140. and of St. Paul, *The law is holy, and the commandment is holy*—and what follows? *I delight*, ſays he, *in the law of God after the inner man. And I conſent unto the law, that it is good.* Rom. vii. 12, 16, 22. The haughty, ſtubborn, deceitful heart, is now made humble, pliable, ſimple, and honeſt, like that of a little child. Hence Chriſt ſays, *Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye ſhall not enter into the kingdom of Heaven. But whoſoever ſhall humble himſelf as a little child, the ſame is greateſt in the kingdom of Heaven.* Matt. xviii. 3, 4. This was alſo the temper of David: *Lord, my heart is not haughty—ſurely I have behaved myſelf as a child that is weaned of his mother: my ſoul is even as a weaned child.* Pſal. cxxxi. 1, 2. The heart that uſed to have no delight in communion with God, but lived as without God in the world, now feels a filial deſire to draw near to him, and addreſs him with the humble boldneſs and freedom of a child. *Becauſe ye are ſons*, ſays St. Paul, *God hath ſent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying Abba, Father.* Gal. iv. 6. that is, Father, Father: the repetition of ſo tender a name intimates the greateſt endearment and affectionate freedom. The heart that had no realizing affecting

fecting views of a future ſtate, now feels the energy of that doctrine, and looks upon heaven and hell as indeed the moſt important realities. The heart that was once earthly and ſenſual, eagerly ſet upon things below, as its main purſuit, is now taught to aſpire to heaven; in heaven is its treaſure, and there it will be. The thoughts that were once ſcattered among a thouſand trifles, are now frequently collected, and fixed upon the great concerns of religion. Now alſo the heart is remarkably altered towards the Lord Jeſus: formerly it ſeemed ſufficient to wear his name, to profeſs his religion, to believe him to be the Saviour of the world, to inſert his name in a prayer now and then, and to give a formal attendance upon the inſtitutions of his worſhip; but O! now he appears in a more important and intereſting light. Now the ſinner is deeply ſenſible that he is indeed the only Saviour, and he moſt eagerly embraces him under that endearing character, and intruſts his eternal all in his hands. Now he appears to him all lovely and glorious, and his heart is for ever captivated with his beauty. Now he prays, and longs, and languiſhes for him, and feels him to be all in all. O! now the very thought of being without Chriſt, kills him. Thus, *God, who firſt commanded light to ſhine out of darkneſs, hath ſhined into his heart, to give him the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jeſus Chriſt*, 2 Cor. iv. 6. in that face where it ſhines with the faireſt beams. Now alſo the man has very different views of himſelf: he ſees himſelf to be a guilty, depraved, vile creature, all over-run with ſin, and deſtitute of all goodneſs, but, as it is wrought in him by divine grace, how different is this from the proud ſelf-righteous eſtimate he was wont to form of himſelf! His views of ſin are alſo quite different from what they uſed to be: he uſed to look upon it as a ſlight excuſable evil, except when it broke out into ſome groſs acts. But now he ſees it to be unſpeakably vile and baſe, in every inſtance and degree. An evil thought, a corrupt motion of deſire, an indiſpoſed heart

heart towards God, appears to him a ſhocking evil, ſuch as nothing but the infinite mercy of God can forgive, and even that mercy, upon no other account but that of the righteouſneſs of Jeſus Chriſt. He ſees it does moſt juſtly deſerve everlaſting puniſhment; and he is often loſt in wonder that the goſpel ſhould open a door of hope even for him, who has been ſo deeply guilty. It breaks his heart to think that he indulged ſo baſe a thing ſo long; and he can never be fully reconciled to himſelf, while he feels the remains of it within him. His repentance now takes a new turn. Formerly he was entirely under the influence of ſelf-love, and therefore, when he had any concern for his ſin, it entirely proceeded from the ſervile principle of fear; fear of the puniſhment, and not hatred of the crime. But now his ſoul is ennobled with more generous principles: now he can mourn over ſin, as a baſe ungrateful evil, even when he has no thoughts of the puniſhment: now he can mourn over ſin as againſt God, and not only as againſt a ſin-puniſhing, but as againſt a ſin-pardoning God. Now he mourns with generous ſorrow over pardoned ſin; and God's being ſo good as to forgive him, is ſo far from leſſening the evil of ſin in his view, that this very conſideration peculiarly affects him. O! that he ſhould be ſo baſe as to ſin againſt a God who is ſo gracious as to forgive him after all! This thought breaks his heart; and God's forgiving him, is a reaſon why he can never forgive himſelf. The heart has alſo a new temper in the duties of religion: it can no more indulge an habitual coldneſs or luke-warmneſs in them, but exerts its powers to the utmoſt; and, when it has a languiſhing interval, it cannot be eaſy in that condition, but tries to rouſe itſelf again. Experience teaches that it is good to draw near to God; and the ordinances of the goſpel are not tireſome formalities, as they were wont to be, but the means of life and refreſhment; and they are its happieſt hours which are ſpent in attending upon them. Now the goſpel is not that dull,

ſtale,

ſtale, neglected tale it once was, but the moſt joyful tidings that ever came from heaven. As a new-born babe, the regenerate ſoul deſires the ſincere milk of the word, that it may grow thereby, 1 Pet. ii. 2. and it is eſteemed more than neceſſary food. Now the careleſs, ſecure ſoul, that was always cautious of over-doing in religion, and flattered itſelf there was no need of being ſo much in earneſt, is effectually rouſed, and ſtrives in earneſt to enter in at the ſtrait gate, convinced both of the difficulty and neceſſity of entering. Now religion is no longer a matter by the by, but a ſerious buſineſs; and every thing that comes in competition with it muſt give way to it. The man is reſolved to ſave his ſoul at all adventures; and this, he is now convinced, is no eaſy work. To ſum up the whole, for I can only give a few ſpecimens of particulars, the regenerate ſoul is changed univerſally in every part. I do not mean the change is perfect in any part: alas! no; ſin ſtill lives, and ſometimes makes violent ſtruggles, though crucified. The old man dies hard. But I mean, the change does really extend to every part. The ſoul is in no reſpect the ſame it was wont to be, as to the concerns of religion. It has new views, new ſenſations, new joys, new ſorrows, new inclinations, and averſions, new hopes and fears: in ſhort, as the apoſtle tells us, *all things are become new*, 2 Cor. v. 17. and according to his inſpired prayer, *the whole man, ſoul, body and ſpirit, is ſanctified.* 1 Theſ. v. 23.

By way of confirmation, let me add a few characters of a regenerate man, which are expreſsly ſcriptural. *Every one that loveth, is born of God*, ſaith St. John, 1 John iv. 7. That is, every new-born ſoul is poſſeſſed with a generous love to all mankind, which prompts it to obſerve the whole law in its conduct towards them *(for love is the fulfilling of the whole law)* and reſtrains it from doing them any injury; *(for love worketh no evil to his neighbour)* Rom. xii. 10. This love extends not only to friends, but alſo to ſtrangers, and even to enemies. It is a friendſhip to human nature in

in general; it ſpreads over the whole earth, and embraces the whole race of man. But as the righteous are the more excellent ones of the earth, it terminates upon them in a peculiar degree: and the reaſon is obvious; they are, in a peculiar ſenſe, the ſaints brethren, the children of the ſame heavenly Father; and they bear a reſemblance to him: and if he loves the Original, he muſt alſo love the Copy. Thus, ſays St. John, *Every one that loveth him that begat, loveth him alſo that is begotten of him.* 1 John v. 1.

Another character of regeneration the ſame apoſtle gives you, 1 John v. 4, 5. and that is, victory over the world by faith. *Every one that is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.* That is, Whatever temptations may ariſe from the riches, honours, or pleaſures of the world, or from the ſociety of mankind, the man that is born of God has ſuch believing views of eternal things, as conſtrains him to conflict with them, and overcome them. He has not ſuch a mean, daſtardly ſoul, as to yield to oppoſition. He is enabled, by divine grace, to brave dangers, and encounter difficulties in ſo good a cauſe: he dares to be wiſe and happy, though all the world ſhould turn againſt him. O what a change is this from his former temper!

Another diſtinguiſhing characteriſtic of the new birth, is, univerſal holineſs of practice, or a conſcientious obſervance of every known duty, and an honeſt, zealous reſiſtance of every known ſin. There is no known duty, however unfaſhionable, diſagreeable, or dangerous, but what the true convert honeſtly endeavours to perform; and there is no known ſin, however cuſtomary, pleaſing, or gainful, but what he honeſtly reſiſts, and from which he labours to abſtain. This neceſſarily follows from what has been ſaid; for when the principles of action are changed within, the courſe of action will be changed too. When the heart is made holy, it will infallibly produce habitual holineſs of practice. A good tree muſt bring forth

good

good fruit. This St. John aſſerts in the ſtrongeſt manner, and in various forms. *We know*, ſays he, *that every one that doth righteouſneſs;* that is, that habitually practiſeth righteouſneſs, *is born of God*, 1 John ii. 29. *We know that whoſoever is born of God ſinneth not;* that is, he ſinneth not habitually, ſo as he may be denominated a ſinner by way of diſtinction; *but he that is begotten of God keepeth himſelf;* that is, keepeth himſelf from the infection of ſin; *and that wicked one toucheth him not.* 1 John v. 18. *Little children*, ſays he, *let no man deceive you: he that doth righteouſneſs is righteous —But he that committeth ſin is of the devil. Whoſoever is born of God doth not commit ſin; i. e.* as I explained it before, he does not habitually ſin in the general tenor of his practice, ſo as to make ſin his diſtinguiſhing character; *for his ſeed remaineth in him;* that is, the principles of grace, implanted in him in regeneration, are immortal, and will never ſuffer him to give himſelf up to ſin, as formerly; *and he cannot ſin becauſe he is born of God:* his being born of God happily diſables him for ever from abandoning himſelf to ſin again.— *In this the children of God are manifeſt; and the children of the devil;* that is, this is the grand diſtinguiſhing characteriſtic exiſting between them, *Whoſoever doth not righteouſneſs, is not of God.* 1 John iii. 7—10. You ſee then a holy practice is one of the moſt certain ſigns of regeneration; and, therefore, in vain do ſuch pretend to it, or boaſt of high attainments in inward experimental religion, who are not holy in all manner of converſation, and do not live righteouſly, ſoberly, and godly in the world.

By this time, I hope, my brethren, you underſtand what it is to be born again. And now, upon a review of the ſubject, there are ſeveral things of importance, which I would ſubmit to your conſideration.

Firſt, I leave you now to conſider, whether baptiſm be the ſame thing with regeneration, or the new birth, in the ſcripture ſenſe. I grant that baptiſm is a ſacramental ſign of regeneration, juſt as the Lord's Supper

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is a ſacramental ſign of the body and blood of Chriſt; and, therefore, baptiſm may be called regeneration, by the ſame figure which Chriſt uſes when he ſays of the bread, *This is my body.* In this metonymical ſenſe, this method of ſpeaking has been uſed by many great and good men; and when they call baptiſm regeneration, they only mean, that it is an outward ſign of it, juſt as the ſacramental bread, for the ſame reaſon, is called the body of Chriſt. Were it always uſed in this ſenſe, it would hardly be worth while to take notice of it as an impropriety; though, I muſt confeſs, I cannot find the ſame form of ſpeech indiſputably uſed concerning baptiſm in the Bible. But when men are taught that the whole of that regeneration, or new birth, which the ſcripture requires as abſolutely neceſſary to ſalvation, means no more than juſt being baptized; and when they that have been baptized, begin to think that they have no more to do with the new birth, the error is too dangerous to be paſſed over in ſilence. I ſhall juſt lead you into a track of thought, by which you may eaſily make yourſelves judges in this controverſy. If baptiſm be regeneration in the ſcripture ſenſe, then, whatever the ſcripture ſays concerning perſons regenerated, born again, or created anew, will alſo hold true concerning perſons baptized. This is ſo plain a principle, that it is hard to make it plainer; for if baptiſm be the ſame with regeneration, the new birth, or the new creation, then the ſame things may be ſaid of it. Proceeding upon this obvious principle, let us make the trial in a few inſtances. It may be truly ſaid of him that is born of God, in the ſcripture ſenſe, that he does not habitually ſin, &c. Now ſubſtitute baptized, inſtead of born of God, and conſider how it will read, "Every one that is baptized ſinneth not; but he that is baptized keepeth himſelf; and the evil one toucheth him not." Has this the appearance of truth? Do not all of you know ſo much of the conduct of many who have been baptized, as to ſee this is moſt notoriouſly falſe? for where can we find

find more audacious ſinners upon earth, than many who have been baptized! Let us make another trial. *Whoſoever is born of God*, in the ſcripture ſenſe, *overcometh the world.* But will it hold true, that whoſoever is baptized, overcometh the world? *If any man be in Chriſt*, in the ſcripture ſenſe, *he is a new creature; old things are paſt away, and all things are become new.* But how will it ſound if you read, *If any man be baptized, he is a new creature; old things are paſt away, and all things are become new?* Does baptiſm univerſally make ſuch a change in the ſubject, as that it may, with any tolerable propriety, be called a new creation?—I might eaſily make the ſame experiment with many other paſſages of ſcripture; but theſe may ſuffice as a ſpecimen. And now, muſt it not be as evident as any mathematical demonſtration, that regeneration, or the new birth, in the ſcripture-ſenſe, is ſomething elſe, ſomething more divine, more intrinſical, more transformative of the whole man, than baptiſm? That man muſt labour to be deceived, who can work up himſelf to believe, after ſuch a repreſentation of the caſe, that if he has been baptized, he has all that regeneration which is neceſſary to his admiſſion into the kingdom of heaven. I know no abſurdity parallel to it, except the doctrine of tranſubſtantiation, the characteriſtical abſurdity of the church of Rome. Becauſe Chriſt, in the diſtribution of the elements in the Euchariſt, ſaid of the bread, *This is my body*, putting the ſign for the thing ſignified, therefore Papiſts conclude, the bread is ſubſtantially the very ſame with the body of Chriſt ſignified by it, though it ſtill retains all the ſenſible properties of bread. Some Proteſtants have fallen into the ſame error as to the other ſacrament of baptiſm, and that with leſs plauſibility. I can find no ſcripture that ſays of baptiſm, "This is regeneration:" and yet, they inſiſt upon it, that it is the very thing; and make the ſign and the thing ſignified one and the ſame.

Let me borrow a very plain and popular, and yet ſubſtantial argument from Limborch. "The great

deſign of Chriſt's coming into the world was to renew and regenerate men: this is a work worthy of his own immediate hand." And yet we are told *Jeſus baptized not, but his diſciples*, John iv. 2. "A plain evidence that he made a diſtinction between baptiſm and regeneration. St. Paul, writing to the Corinthians, ſays, *I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Criſpus and Gaius.* 1 Cor. i. 14. "But if baptiſm be regeneration, his meaning muſt be, I thank God that I regenerated none of you.—But is this cauſe of thankſgiving? Could he give thanks to God that he had not regenerated any of them? *Chriſt*, ſays he, *ſent me not to baptize*:—"but can we think Chriſt did not ſend the chief of the apoſtles to promote the great work of regeneration? He, elſewhere, calls himſelf their ſpiritual father," *for*, ſays he, *in Chriſt Jeſus I have begotten you through the goſpel.* 1 Cor. iv. 15. "But if baptiſm be the new birth, he could not have been their father, or begotten them, unleſs he had baptized them. From which it is evident, that St. Paul made a great difference between baptiſm and regeneration."

Therefore, let no man deceive you with vain words. Baptiſm is an ordinance of Jeſus Chriſt, which you ſhould think highly of; but do not put it out of its place, by ſubſtituting it for quite another thing. Believe it, this is not that kind of regeneration which you muſt be the ſubjects of, if you would enter into the kingdom of God.

Another thing which I would now leave to your conſideration, is, Whether regeneration, or the new birth, in the ſenſe I have explained it, be not a rational, noble thing? And whether ſo great a change in a man's temper and conduct may not emphatically be called a new birth? When a man is born again, the ruins of his nature are repaired, and every noble and divine grace and virtue are implanted in his heart. His heart is made capable of generous ſenſations; his underſtanding has ſuitable views of the moſt intereſting and ſublime objects; and his temper and behaviour

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are rightly formed towards God and man. In ſhort, the mean, depraved, earth-born creature, is made an infant-angel; nay, St. Peter tells you, *he is made partaker of the divine nature.* 2 Pet. i. 4. What a glorious and ſurpriſing change is this! Should you ſee a clod of earth riſing from under your feet, and brightening into a ſun, it would not be ſo glorious a transformation. This change gives a man the very temper of heaven, and prepares him for the enjoyments and employments of that ſacred region.

Therefore, *marvel not that I ſay unto you, ye muſt be born again.* Do not gaze and wonder at me, as if I told you ſome ſtrange, new, abſurd thing, when I tell you, you muſt be regenerated in the manner I have explained, if ever you would enter into the kingdom of heaven. Conſult your own reaſon and experience —and they will tell you, that as heaven is the region of perfect holineſs, and as you are indiſputably corrupted, depraved creatures, you muſt be ſo changed, as to be made holy; or in other words, you muſt be born again, before you can enjoy the happineſs of that holy place: or conſult the Bible, which you muſt own to be true, or own yourſelves to be the moſt groſs hypocrites in profeſſing the chriſtian religion; conſult your Bible, I ſay, and you will find the abſolute neceſſity of being born again aſſerted in the ſtrongeſt terms. Need I remind you of the ſolemn aſſeveration of Chriſt in my context, *Verily, verily, I ſay unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot ſee the kingdom of heaven!* The ſame bleſſed lips have aſſured us, that, *except we be converted, and become as little children, we cannot enter into his kingdom.* Matt. xviii. 2. St. Paul ſpeaks in the ſame ſtrain: *If any man be in Chriſt*, as we all muſt before we can be ſaved by him, *he is a new creature*, &c. *We are his workmanſhip*, ſays he, *created in Chriſt Jeſus to good works.* Eph. ii. 10. *In Chriſt Jeſus, neither circumciſion availeth any thing, nor uncircumciſion, but the new creature.* All external forms of religion, whether Jewiſh or chriſtian, are of no avail, without this new creation.

tion. Gal. vi. 15. This is alſo more than intimated in that comprehenſive promiſe of the Old Teſtament (Ezek. xxxvi. 25, 26.) *A new heart will I give you; and a new ſpirit will I put within you*, &c. And are not theſe repeated declarations ſufficient to convince you of the neceſſity of this great change! Will you any more marvel, when you are told, you muſt be born again! No, rather marvel to hear the contrary: it may make you wonder indeed, to be told, that an unholy ſinner, without any change, is fit for the preſence of a holy God; fit to reliſh the holy enjoyments of heaven; and capable of being happy in what is directly contrary to his nature. This would be ſtrange, abſurd doctrine indeed; and wherever you hear it, you may juſtly wonder at it, and deſpiſe ſuch nonſenſe.

Now if this be true, that *except a man be born again, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God*, then it will follow, that juſt as many perſons in this aſſembly as have been born again, juſt ſo many are in a ſtate of favour with God, and prepared for the happineſs of heaven. And, on the other hand, juſt as many as are unregenerate, juſt ſo many lie dead in ſin, under the wrath of God, and liable to everlaſting miſery. Let each of you particularly admit this conviction: "If I am not born again, I have not the leaſt ground to hope for happineſs in my preſent ſtate."

Upon this follows another inquiry, of the utmoſt importance; and that is, Whether you have ever experienced the bleſſed change of the new birth? Have your views, your diſpoſitions, and your conduct been changed in the manner deſcribed? and can you lay claim to thoſe diſtinguiſhing characters of a regenerate ſoul, which have been mentioned? Pauſe, and think ſeriouſly; recollect your paſt experiences; look into your own hearts; obſerve the tenor of your practice; and from the whole, endeavour to gather an honeſt anſwer to this grand queſtion, "Have I ever been born again?"

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If you can anſwer this in your favour, St. Peter will tell you the happy conſequence; and I ſhall only deſire you to read thoſe moſt comfortable verſes, 1 Pet. i. 3—6. *Bleſſed be the God and Father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, who, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again to a lively hope—to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reſerved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God, through faith unto ſalvation, ready to be revealed in the laſt time; wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a ſeaſon (if need be) ye are in heavineſs through manifold temptations.*

But if, on the other hand, you find you have never been born again, what is to be done? Muſt you lie ſtill in that condition? or ſhould you try to get out of it? I am ſure my deſign in endeavouring to let you ſee your condition, is, that you may eſcape out of it, and be happy; and if you are ſo kind to yourſelves as to concur with me in this deſign, I hope, through divine grace, we ſhall ſucceed. This introduces the next inquiry, namely,

II. Who is the Author of this divine change, called the new birth?

The change is ſo great, ſo noble, and divine, that from thence alone we may infer it can be produced only by divine power. And the nature of man, in its preſent ſtate, is ſo corrupt and weak, that it is neither inclined nor able to produce it. It is alſo uniformly aſcribed to God in the ſacred writings. The regenerate ſoul is repeatedly ſaid to be born of God; *born, not of blood, nor of the will of the fleſh, nor of the will of man, but of God.* John i. 13. *All things are become new,* ſays St. Paul, *and all things* (that is, all theſe new things) *are of God.* 2 Cor. v. 17, 18. *Every good gift, and every perfect gift,* ſays St. James, *is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights—who of his own will hath begotten us with the word of truth.* James i. 17, 18. The ſpirit is repeatedly mentioned as the author of the new birth, in the chapter where my text lies. This may ſuffice for the proof of ſo plain a point.

Here

Here then, ſinners, you ſee to whom you muſt look for this bleſſing. You can no more regenerate yourſelves, than you could beget yourſelves at firſt. And this you muſt be deeply ſenſible of. But he that made you at firſt is able to new-make you, and to repair his own workmanſhip, which you have demoliſhed. And it is He who has actually changed many a heart in our guilty world.—Here the next inquiry comes in very ſeaſonably, namely,

III. In what way does this divine agent produce this change?

He is pleaſed to uſe ſuch variety, as to circumſtances, that I cannot take time to deſcribe them. But as to the ſubſtance of the work, which is the ſame in all adults, he generally carries it on in the following manner. The firſt ſtep is, to convince the ſinner of his need of this change, by diſcovering to him his guilt and danger, and particularly the univerſal corruption of his nature. He is rouſed out of a ſtate of ſtupid ſecurity by an affecting view of the holineſs of God, of the purity of his law, of the terror of its penalty, of the great evil of ſin, and of his own expoſedneſs to the divine diſpleaſure upon the account of it. Upon this he becomes ſad and ſerious, uneaſy in his mind, and anxious about his condition. He endeavours to reform his life; he prays, and uſes the other means of grace with earneſtneſs unknown before. And when he has gone on in this courſe for ſome time, he begins perhaps to flatter himſelf, that now he is in a ſafe condition. But alas! he does not yet know the worſt of himſelf. Therefore the holy Spirit opens his eyes to ſee the inward univerſal corruption of his whole ſoul, and that a mere outward reformation is far from being a ſufficient cure of a diſeaſe ſo inveterate. Hereupon the awakened ſinner betakes himſelf to the uſe of the means of grace with redoubled vigour and earneſtneſs, and ſtrives to change the principles of action within. But alas! he finds his heart is a ſtubborn thing, and altogether unmanageable to him; and after

ter repeated ſtrivings to no purpoſe, he is effectually convinced of his own inability, and the abſolute neceſſity of the exertion of divine power to make him truly good. Therefore he lies at the throne of grace, as a poor, helpleſs, anxious ſinner, entirely at mercy, and unable to relieve himſelf. It would take up more time than I can allow, to deſcribe the various exerciſes, the anxious fears, and eager pantings, the ſtrong cries and tears of a ſoul in this condition. What I have hinted may put ſuch of you in mind of them, as have never been the ſubjects of them. While the ſinner lies in this deſponding ſituation, it pleaſes God to pity him. Now the important hour is come, when the old man muſt be crucified; when the divine and immortal principles muſt be implanted in a heart full of ſin; and when the dead ſinner muſt begin to live a holy and divine life. The Great God inſtantaneouſly changes the whole ſoul, and gives it a new, a heavenly turn. In ſhort, now is wrought that important change, which I have already deſcribed, which is called the new birth, and denominates the man a new creature.

Here again you may furniſh yourſelves with materials for ſelf-examination. If you have been born again, you have thus felt the pangs of the new birth, and ſeen your guilty, ſinful, and dangerous condition in a true light. And can you put your hand upon your heart, and ſay, "Here is the heart that has been the ſubject of this operation?"

Hence alſo may be gathered ſome proper directions for ſuch as are in a ſtate of nature, how to attain the new birth.

Endeavour to be thoroughly acquainted with the corruption of your nature: it is from this that the neceſſity of a new birth proceeds.

Be fully convinced of the indiſpenſable neceſſity of this change to your ſalvation.

Break off from, and forſake whatever tends to obſtruct the new birth; as exceſſive worldly cares, bad company, and in ſhort, all ſin.

Seriouſly

Seriouſly uſe all the means of grace; as, earneſt prayer, attentive hearing of the word, &c.

Perſevere in ſo doing, till your endeavours are crowned with ſucceſs. And particularly, do not grow impatient of thoſe anxieties and fears that will at firſt attend your purſuit.

Theſe ſhort hints may ſuffice by way of direction, if you are ſincerely deſirous of being directed. And what do you determine to do? Will you not reſolve to ſeek after this important change, upon which your eternal All depends? O! let us part to-day fully determined upon this, that we will implore the power and mercy of God to create in us clean hearts, and renew within us right ſpirits.

SERMON XLIX.

THE DIVINE *LIFE* IN THE *SOULS* OF *MEN* CONSIDERED.

GAL. ii. 20. *I am crucified with Chriſt, nevertheleſs I live; yet not I but Chriſt that liveth in me: and the life I now live in the fleſh, I live by the faith of the Son of God.*

THE principal deſign of St. Paul in this Epiſtle, is to aſſert his divine miſſion, in oppoſition to the inſinuations of the judaizing ſeducers that had intruded into the Galatian church; and to prove the juſtification of a ſinner to be only through the merit of Chriſt's righteouſneſs, and the inſtrumentality of faith. To confirm the latter, he argues, Gal. ii. 15, 16, from the caſe of the apoſtles and Jewiſh chriſtians in general: *We who are Jews by nature, and not ſinners of the Gentiles, knowing that a man is not juſtified by the works of*

of the law, but by the faith of Jeſus Chriſt, even we have believed in Jeſus Chriſt, that we might be juſtified by the faith of Chriſt, and not by the works of the law. And, Gal. ii. 19. he explicitly declares his own caſe in particular, as agreeing with theirs. *I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God;* that is, by the knowledge of the perfection of the law, as to its extent and ſpirituality; I am utterly unhinged and thrown off from all dependance on the works of the law for juſtification, and from expecting ſtrength to yield obedience to be conveyed, according to the covenant of works;—and God's deſign in bringing me off from this dependance, and mine in relinquiſhing it, is not that I may turn libertine, and caſt off all obligations to obedience, but that I may, by ſtrength derived from Chriſt, devote myſelf wholly to him, and make my life a ſeries of obedience to his will.

He goes on relating his own caſe in the text; in which you may obſerve theſe truths:

Firſt, "That believers are endowed with ſpiritual activity; or, That they are enabled to ſerve God, and perform good works." This is intimated by two expreſſions, *I am crucified*, and, *I live;* which, though they ſeem contradictory, do really mean the ſame thing. *I am crucified*, ſignifies the mortification of indwelling ſin, the ſubduction and extirpation of corrupt principles and inclinations: and he calls the mortification of theſe the crucifixion of himſelf *(I am crucified)* becauſe of their intimate inheſion with his very nature; they were a ſort of ſelf to him. We have a like expreſſion uſed, and explained by himſelf in Rom. vi. 6. *Our old man is crucified with him, that the body of ſin might be deſtroyed, that henceforth we ſhould not ſerve ſin.* Now the mortification of ſin is a part of the ſervice of God, at leaſt a neceſſary pre-requiſite. So the apoſtle reaſons in Rom. vi. 2, 6, 11. *How ſhall we that are dead to ſin, live any longer therein? Reckon yourſelves to be dead indeed unto ſin, but alive unto God.* The other expreſſion, *I live*, ſignifies ſpiritual activity; a vigorous,

perſevering ſerving of God; a living unto God (as it is explained v. 19. and Rom. vi. 11.) Life, as aſcribed to a rational being, imports not only a continuance in exiſtence, in which ſenſe inanimate things may be ſaid to live, but eſpecially a power of rational operation frequently exerciſed;—and when attributed to a morally upright being, as ſuch, it imports more than ſome kind of power of operation, namely, a vital principle of ſpiritual and holy operation, and the frequent, perſevering exerciſe of it. Such a principle or power is very ſignificantly called Life, to denote its intimacy in the ſoul, its vivacity, and permanency.

Secondly, We may obſerve, that "the vital principle of holineſs in believers, whereby they are enabled to ſerve God, is communicated to them through Chriſt only as a Mediator." This is intimated by that expreſſion, *I am crucified with Chriſt;* that is, ſin is crucified in me by virtue of the crucifixion of Chriſt; from the merits of his death my ſtrength to ſubdue ſin reſults; and the mortification of it is the certain conſequent of his ſufferings, becauſe thereby divine grace was purchaſed and inſured for his choſen, to be communicated at the time appointed. To the ſame purpoſe he ſpeaks in Gal. vi. 14. Far be it from me *that I ſhould glory, ſave in the croſs of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, by whom* [or by which *] *the world is crucified to me, and I unto the world.* This is alſo aſſerted in the emphatical epanorthoſis, *I live; yet not I, but Chriſt liveth in me:* that is, ſpiritual life is formally in me, but it is not ſelf-originated; it does not reſult from my natural principles (which are ſo eſſential to me, that I may repreſent them under the perſonal pronoun *I*) but was firſt implanted, and is ſtill ſupported and cheriſhed by the power and grace of God through Chriſt; and it is in every reſpect ſo dependent upon him, and his influence is ſo intimately diffuſed through my ſoul, that

* The relative may be referred to σταυρῷ, or to Ἰησοῦ Χριστῷ; and either way the ſenſe is much the ſame.

that I may ſay, *Chriſt liveth in me.* A like expreſſion is uſed in Col. iii. 3, 4. *Chriſt is our life.*

Thirdly, We may take notice, "that believers receive ſupplies from Chriſt for the maintenance and nouriſhment of their ſpiritual life." *The life which I now live* (or, as it might be rendered more ſignificantly, *what* I now live) *in the fleſh, I live by the faith of the Son of God.*

So that the ſubſtance of the text is exhauſted in theſe three doctrines, "That all true believers are endowed with an ability to ſerve God: That this ability was firſt communicated, and is ſtill maintained through Chriſt only: and, That it is by faith they derive ſupplies from him, for the ſupport and nouriſhment thereof."

You may obſerve I here reaſon from a particular to an univerſal, and infer, that becauſe theſe doctrines are true with reſpect to St. Paul, therefore they are true with reſpect to believers in general; and the ſcope of the text warrants this method of reaſoning in this inſtance, which is confeſſedly fallacious in other caſes; for St. Paul here introduces his own caſe with a deſign to repreſent and illuſtrate the caſe of believers in common; which he could not reaſonably have done, had not theirs been ſubſtantially the ſame with his in theſe reſpects. Beſides, he declares theſe things of himſelf, not upon the account of any circumſtances peculiar to himſelf, which might appropriate them to him; and therefore, though ſo eminent a ſaint might have peculiar degrees of them, yet as to their reality and kind, they equally belong to all true chriſtians.

Nothing can be more profitable, nothing more neceſſary, than right notions about ſpiritual life. It is the main buſineſs of thoſe that have it not to ſeek it, and of thoſe that have it to cheriſh it; but how can they do either, if they know not what it is? Without it our religion is vain; we cannot ſerve the living God here, nor enjoy him hereafter; we are expoſed to the eternal agonies of the ſecond death, and our

ſouls

ſouls are pining under a ſpiritual decay, that will at length conſume our vitals. How neceſſary then is ſpiritual life! And the neceſſity of the thing infers the neceſſity of the knowledge of it. The profeſſion of it is the ſource of all vital religion; it is the health of the ſpirit; the ornament and perfection of the human nature; the grand pre-requiſite to everlaſting happineſs; the dawn of celeſtial glory; is it not then incomparably profitable? And muſt not the right knowledge of it be ſo too? Yet ſome are entirely ignorant of it; others, who ſay they ſee, are widely miſtaken about its nature, the time and manner of its communication, its ſubjects, the author and meritorious cauſe of it, and the way in which it is ſupported and cheriſhed: and therefore, for the inſtruction of the ignorant, the rectification of wrong ſentiments, and the confirmation of our minds in the truth, it may be expedient briefly to attempt the ſolution of the following inquiries:

I. Wherein ſpiritual life conſiſts?

II. When it is communicated?

III. Whether it be inſtantaneouſly communicated, or gradually acquired by repeated acts?

IV. Who are the ſubjects of it? or, in what extent is it communicated?

V. In what ſenſe is it communicated and ſupported through Chriſt?

VI. How faith derives ſupplies from him for its ſupport and nouriſhment?

I. "Wherein does ſpiritual life conſiſt?" This inquiry, though neceſſary both to inform your minds and to repel the charge of unintelligibleneſs, ſo frequently alledged againſt this doctrine, yet is exceeding difficult, both becauſe of the myſteriouſneſs of the thing in itſelf, and becauſe of the blindneſs of the minds of thoſe that are not endowed with it. It is myſterious in itſelf, as every kind of life is. The effects and many of the properties of animal life are plain, but what animal life is in itſelf is an inquiry too ſublime

ſublime for the moſt philoſophic and ſoaring mind. Now ſpiritual life ſtill approaches nearer to the life of the divine Being, that boundleſs ocean of incomprehenſible myſteries, and conſequently exceeds our capacity more than any other. But beſides, ſuch is the blindneſs of unregenerate ſouls, that they cannot receive or know the things of the ſpirit of God, 1 Cor. ii. 14. and therefore what is knowable by enlightened minds concerning ſpiritual life, cannot be apprehended with ſuitable clearneſs by them. The power of underſtanding it ſeems to be the effect of the thing underſtood, and cannot exiſt ſeparately from it. So it is in other kinds of life. Nothing but reaſon can inform what is a rational life. Let the faculties of the moſt ſagacious animal be ever ſo muſt poliſhed, it can receive no ideas of it. So *he that believeth, hath the witneſs in himſelf*, 1 John v. 10. *and none but himſelf can hear its teſtimony.* * But ſuppoſe we could form clear ideas, we ſhould ſtill be at a loſs for clear expreſſions. I have a clear idea of many of the appetites, paſſions, and motions of animal life; but words may fail me to expreſs them intelligibly to another, eſpecially if he has no experience of them himſelf. It need not, therefore, afford you any ſurprize, if, after all that ſhall be ſaid to illuſtrate this point, it ſtill remains obſcure. To deſign any more than to give you ſome faint glimmerings, ſome half-formed, inadequate conceptions of it, would be a piece of arrogant vanity.

Now ſpiritual life ſuppoſes a living ſpiritual principle, and it implies a diſpoſition and a power to ſerve God, or of holy operation.

1. It ſuppoſes a living ſpiritual principle. There can be no life, no vital actions, without a vital principle, from whence they flow: *e. g.* there can be no animal life, no animal

* I do not mean that the unregenerate have the ſame degree of incapacity in the one caſe as beaſts have in the other, but only that the one is as really incapable as the other. Reaſon in the unregenerate approaches nearer to ſpiritual life than the powers of animal life do to reaſon, and yet comes entirely ſhort of it.

animal ſenſations and motions, without a principle of animal life. By a vital principle I mean that from which life and its actions and paſſions immediately proceed: *e.g.* in the formation of our ſouls a principle of reaſon is concreated with them, which is the ſource, the immediate cauſe of their life and rational operations. I call this a principle, becauſe it is the beginning of life. Now ſpiritual life muſt ſuppoſe a principle of holineſs. A principle of life of any kind will not ſuffice; it muſt be particularly and formally a holy principle; for life and all its operations will be of the ſame kind with the principle from which they proceed. Now a holy principle is ſomething diſtinct from and ſuperadded to the mere natural principle of reaſon. By virtue of this a man can think and will; but experience aſſures us, that thinking and willing, abſtractedly conſidered, or under ſundry modifications which they are capable of, are very different from thinking and willing in a holy manner, or with thoſe peculiar modifications which ſpiritual operations bear. I can will an indifferent or evil object, if it appears to me as good; but my willing that which is morally good as ſuch, is a very different act; and the principle from which the former act with its modification proceeds, may not be capable of producing the latter ſo modified. This may be illuſtrated by the caſe of the devils and their aſſociates of the human race. They ſtill retain the principle of reaſon, and are capable of thinking and willing; otherwiſe they would be incapable of torment, for without conſciouſneſs there could be no ſenſe of miſery, and conſciouſneſs implies thinking; and without willing there can be no deſire of happineſs, or abhorrence of penal evil; but yet they are utterly incapable of thinking and willing in a manner morally good, and therefore a principle of holineſs muſt be ſomething diſtinct from a mere rational principle.

It may be urged, "That all the acts of ſpiritual life may be reſolved into the acts of reaſon, namely, thinking

thinking and willing in a holy manner; and therefore the principle of the former is the ſame with that of the latter. In anſwer to this, I grant that the principle of reaſon, when it implies a power of putting forth ſuch acts, and about ſuch objects, as holineſs includes; when it implies a power of knowing and chooſing thoſe things which the divine law requires us to know and chooſe, that then it is the ſame with a principle of ſpiritual life; and this is the caſe of ſuch reaſonable beings as ſtill continue in their original uprightneſs: but the principle of reaſon may be ſo maimed as to loſe this power, and yet not loſe its nature; that is, it may become incapable of that manner of operation which ſpiritual life produces, and yet continue a principle of reaſon ſtill. This is evident from the caſe of infernal ſpirits, formerly mentioned. Now the principle of ſpiritual life ſupplies this moral defect; it adds to reaſon a capacity of exerciſing itſelf ſuitably about ſpiritual things. Such a capacity is a ſeparable adjunct of reaſon, and by the corruption of our natures it is actually ſeparated from it; and conſequently, till it be ſuperadded to our rational powers, we are incapable of ſpiritual operation; I mean ſuch a manner of ſpiritual operation as is morally good and acceptable to God. Our rational powers indeed can ſtill exerciſe themſelves about divine things, but then it is not in a fit manner: and therefore when a ſinner is quickened by efficacious grace, a power of acting in a fit manner with reſpect to theſe things is ſuperadded to his rational powers; and before this there is nothing in him out of which ſuch a power may be educed.

To illuſtrate this matter, let us ſuppoſe a man deprived of the faculty of memory, and yet to continue rational (as he might in a low degree) according to this ſuppoſition, he will be always incapable of an act of memory, however ſtrong his powers of perception, volition, &c. may be, till the power of exerciſing his reaſon in that particular way which is called remembering, be conferred upon him. So let a ſinner's mere natural

natural powers be ever ſo much refined and poliſhed, yet, if there be no principle of ſpiritual life diſtinct from them infuſed, he will be everlaſtingly incapable of living religion. This gracious principle is called *the ſeed of God*, 1 John iii. 9. to intimate, that as the ſeed of vegetables is the firſt principle of the plant, and of its vegetable life, ſo is this of ſpiritual life, and all its vital acts.

2. Spiritual life implies a diſpoſition to holy operation; an inward propenſity, a ſpontaneous inclination towards holineſs; a *willing that which is good.* Rom. vii. 18. Every kind of life has ſome peculiar innate tendencies, ſympathies, and antipathies: ſo animal life implies a natural inclination to food, to move at proper ſeaſons, &c. There is a ſavour, a reliſh for divine things, as eſſential to ſpiritual life as our natural guſts and reliſhes are to natural life. Hence gracious deſires are often ſignified in ſcripture under the metaphors of hungering and thirſting; and to this St. Peter expreſsly alludes; *as new-born babes, deſire the ſincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby.* 1 Pet. ii. 2. By virtue of this diſpoſition, believers ſet their affections on things above, Col. iii. 2. they reliſh, they ſavour, they affect things above. This is the ſpiritual-mindedneſs, the ſavour of the ſpirit, which is ſpiritual life; and ſtands in oppoſition to the reliſh and propenſions of mere nature. Rom. viii. 6. By virtue of this the ſtrongeſt bent of their ſouls is God-ward; they tend, they gravitate towards him as their proper centre. Their *deſire is unto him, and to the remembrance of his name.* Iſa. xxvi. 8. *Their ſoul follows hard after him.* Pſal. lxiii. 8. By virtue of this they incline to keep all God's commandments; they have an inward tendency to obedience; they love God's law; they *delight in it after the inner man*, Pſal. cxix. 97. Rom. vii. 22. and their love and delight will habitually ſway them to obſerve it: religion is their element, their choice. It is not in them forced and unnatural, as all thoſe operations are which do not proceed from an intrinſic

trinſic principle; and that reluctancy and indiſpoſedneſs which they ſometimes unhappily feel in themſelves to religious duties, is preternatural with reſpect to this ſpiritual diſpoſition; as the loathing of healthful food is to the human body: it proceeds from a diſorder, a weakneſs in their ſpiritual life, occaſioned by the ſtrugglings and tranſient prevalency of contrary principles: it is owing to the luſtings of the fleſh againſt the ſpirit. Again, Their obedience is not ſervile and mercenary, reſulting merely from the apprehenſion of the miſery which will enſue upon diſobedience; but it is generous and filial, proceeding from a convictive view of the intrinſic reaſonableneſs, congruity, and amiableneſs of the duties of holineſs; from the pleaſure and ſatisfaction which the performance of them, under this view, naturally produces; (ſo a man is excited to eat, not merely by his apprehenſion of the neceſſity of it for the ſupport of his body, but alſo by the pleaſure he finds in the very action) and from a ſenſe of the divine authority enjoining thoſe duties. By this the genuine acts of ſpiritual life are infallibly diſtinguiſhed from that low and ignoble devotion which flows from cuſtom, education, horrors of conſcience, and all the principles of mere nature.

It is true, indeed, ſome perſons by nature, and conſequently without this ſupernatural diſpoſition, may incline to and delight in ſundry things that, as to the matter of them, are religious duties. So *(e. g.)* ſome are naturally averſe to temperance; and ſobriety is inwrought in their very conſtitutions. Yet ſtill, this gracious diſpoſition is diſtinguiſhed from ſuch a natural inclination by theſe two marks: The firſt implies a diſtinct reference to and a ſenſe of the authority of the divine Lawgiver as enjoining thoſe duties, and prompts a perſon to obſerve them formally as duties, as acts of obedience; but the latter prompts to the obſervance of them, conſidering them as things agreeable to the perſon's natural temper, without any diſtinct reference to God; and ſo they are rather acts of

ſelf-gratification than of obedience to the divine authority; and the perſon would incline to them, if they were not commanded at all. They are duties materially, in themſelves, but not formally, as performed by him: a regard to the authority of God, which is the conſtitutive form of obedience, is left out. A generous temper may incline to give alms; for the Lord's ſake, is omitted. (2.) Spiritual life diſpoſes to all duties of religion and acts of holineſs univerſally. It delights in holineſs as ſuch, and regards the authority of the law for itſelf; and conſequently, whatever has the nature of holineſs, whatever has the ſanction of divine authority, it cannot but affect and reliſh, even though it ſhould be very contrary to a man's natural inclinations and temporal advantage. But a natural propenſion is always partial and limited, inclines to ſome duties only, neglecting others of equal or greater importance, which thwart the man's corrupt propenſions. In a word, ſuch a one's religion proceeds from the very ſame diſpoſition that his ſins proceed from, namely, a diſpoſition to pleaſe himſelf. Hence it is always a maimed, imperfect, half-formed thing; it has not that amiable ſymmetry and uniformity, that congruous proportion and connection of parts, which are the ornament and diſtinguiſhing characteriſtic of that religion which flows from a heart univerſally diſpoſed to holineſs.

3. Spiritual life implies a power of holy operation. A heavenly vigour, a divine activity animates the whole ſoul. It implies more than an inefficacious diſpoſition, a dull, lazy velleity, productive of nothing but languid wiſhes. So every kind of life implies a power of operation ſuitable to its nature. Animal life *(e. g.)* has not only an innate propenſity, but alſo a natural power to move, to receive, and digeſt food, &c. *They that wait on the Lord ſhall renew their ſtrength*, Iſa. xl. 31. that is, they have ſtrength given them; renewed and increaſed by repeated acts, in the progreſs of ſanctification. They are *ſtrengthened with might*, *by*

by the Spirit, in the inner man. Eph. iii. 16. I do not mean that ſpiritual life is always ſenſible and equally vigorous; alas! it is ſubject to many languiſhments and indiſpoſitions; but I mean there is habitually in a ſpiritual man a power, an ability for ſerving God, which, when all pre-requiſites concur, and hindrances are removed, is capable of putting forth acts of holineſs, and which does actually exert itſelf frequently. So animal life is ſubject to many diſorders, which weaken its powers of operation, but yet ſtill it retains thoſe powers; and they are in ſome meaſure active, even under the greateſt indiſpoſition, at leaſt in reſiſting the diſorder, though perhaps with faint ſtruggles. Again, I do not mean an independent power, which is ſo ſelf-active as to need no quickening energy from the divine Spirit to bring it into act, but a power capable of acting under the animating influences of grace, which, as to their reality, are common to all believers, though they are communicated in different degrees to different perſons. There is no need of the infuſion of a new power, which the Spirit might actuate; but they have a power already, which needs nothing but the ſuitable concurrence of other cauſes to educe it into act. So the power of reaſon is not independent, ſo as to be capable of operation without the concurrence of divine providence, common to mankind, to quicken it into act; yet it is a power of reaſon ſtill, becauſe it is capable of rational acts, under common providential influence. But ſhould we ſuppoſe a beaſt the object of that influence, it would ſtill continue incapable of rational acts, till a rational power be implanted in it. The illuſtration itſelf directs us to the application of it.

Thus I have briefly ſhewn you wherein ſpiritual life conſiſts; but I am afraid it may be ſtill wrapt in obſcurity from the eyes of ſome. And indeed it would require longer time, larger extent, and greater abilities to reflect ſufficient light on ſo myſterious a point. Before we loſe ſight of this head, let us improve it to theſe purpoſes.

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Let us improve it as a caution againſt this common miſtake, viz. That our mere natural powers, under the common aids of divine grace, poliſhed and refined by the inſtitutions of the goſpel, are a ſufficient principle of holineſs, without the addition of any new principle. You ſee a principle of ſpiritual life is ſupernatural; it is a divine, heaven-born thing; it is the ſeed of God; a plant planted by our heavenly Father. But alas! how many content themſelves with a ſelf-begotten holineſs! They have formed to themſelves a ſyſtem of natural ſelf-ſprung religion (I mean that it is natural originally and ſubjectively, though it be pretended to be divine objectively, becauſe its patrons acknowledge objective revelation) in this they acquieſce as ſufficient, as though they knew not that *that which is born of the fleſh is fleſh.* The cogitativeneſs of matter appears to me a notion very like this; for I think it might be demonſtrated as clearly, that our mere natural powers, in our preſent lapſed ſtate, without the infuſion of any divine, ſupernatural principle, are incapable of living, evangelical holineſs; as it can, that mere matter, without the ſuper-addition of a principle intirely diſtinct from it, is capable of thinking, however much it be poliſhed, or however differently it be modified.

Let us alſo improve what has been ſaid, to remove another equally common and pernicious error, namely, That goſpel-holineſs conſiſts merely in a ſeries of acts materially good. Some imagine that all the actions they do, which are materially lawful and a part of religion, have juſt ſo much of holineſs in them; and as they multiply ſuch actions, their ſanctification increaſes in their imagination. But alas! do they not know, that a principle, a diſpoſition, a power of holy acting muſt precede, and be the ſource of all holy acts! That a new heart muſt be given us, and a new ſpirit put within us, before we can *walk in God's ſtatutes and keep his judgments, and do them!* Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27. That we muſt be created in Jeſus Chriſt unto good works, Eph. ii. 10. before we can walk in them! That

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the love of God muſt be ſhed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghoſt, Rom. v. 5. before we can love Him! I do not ſay, that they that are void of ſpiritual life ſhould not attempt to perform religious duties in the beſt manner they can, by virtue of their natural powers; for this is undoubtedly their duty, both becauſe their ſin is leſs when only the manner of their actions is ſinful, than when the matter and manner too are ſinful; and becauſe God, who has a right to appoint what methods he pleaſes, for the collation of his own favours, has conſtituted this as the way for them to obtain ſpiritual life.. But I ſay, religious and moral duties, however frequently and perſeveringly performed, are not evangelical holineſs, when they are not done from a gracious ſupernatural principle: they are but ſpurious fruits growing from the wild root of depraved nature; and we had beſt not pleaſe ourſelves with the view of them, as though they were the fruits of holineſs, leſt we be conſumed at laſt as fruitleſs and noxious briars and thorns.

Further, Let us improve our account of ſpiritual life, to inform us of a very conſiderable difference betwixt a mere moral, and a ſpiritual life; or evangelical holineſs and morality. Spiritual life is of a divine original; evangelical holineſs flows from a ſupernatural principle: but mere morality is natural; it is but the refinement of our natural principles, under the aids of common grace, in the uſe of proper means; and conſequently it is obtainable by unregenerate men. Hence the ſame act may be differently denominated, according to the principles from which it proceeds: that may be a piece of mere morality in one, who acts from natural principles only, which is an act of holineſs in another, who acts from a principle of ſpiritual life. So an alms, when given from a gracious principle, and for Chriſt's ſake, is a gracious act; but when given from a principle of natural generoſity only, it deſerves no higher name than that of mere morality. —A miſtake in this is a rock we may tremble to look at,

at, and ought anxiouſly to avoid; for alas! how many have been daſhed to pieces upon it!

Again, We may improve what has been ſaid, to convince us, that a life of formality, liſtleſſneſs, and inactivity, is far from being a ſpiritual life. Where theſe things are habitual and predominant, they are infallible ſymptoms of ſpiritual death. It is true (as has been already obſerved) believers are ſubject to many ſickly qualms and frequent indiſpoſitions; yea, at times, their languiſhments are ſuch, that the operations of the vital principle within them are hardly diſcernible to themſelves or others; and the vigour of their devotion, in their moſt ſprightly hours, is checked and borne down by the body of death under which they groan. Yet ſtill, there is an inextinguiſhable ſpark of life within, which ſcatters a glimmering light in the thickeſt darkneſs, and ſometimes ſhines with illuſtrious brightneſs. The pulſe of the ſpirit, though weak and irregular, ſtill beats. There is an active power that reluctates and ſtruggles againſt the counter-ſtrivings of the fleſh; that, under the greateſt languor, puts forth ſome weak efforts, ſome faint eſſays, and, under the actuating influence of the divine Spirit, invigorates the ſoul to *mount up with wings like an eagle, to run without wearying, and walk without fainting.* And O! the joy, the pleaſure of ſuch heavenly activity! We therefore may write *Tekel* on the dull, inoperative religion of many; it ſerves for no end, but to prove them dead in treſpaſſes and ſins. The deſign of the whole diſpenſation of God's grace towards fallen ſinners, is their vivification to holineſs, *that they may bring forth fruit unto God*, Rom. vii. 4. and ſure, where that deſign is not obtained, there can be no true religion. Let us therefore beware leſt we ſhould have a name to live, while we are dead.

SERMON

SERMON L.

THE DIVINE *LIFE* IN THE *SOULS* OF *MEN* CONSIDERED.

GAL. ii. 20. *I am crucified with Chriſt, nevertheleſs I live; yet not I, but Chriſt that liveth in me: and the life I now live in the fleſh, I live by the faith of the Son of God.*

We proceed to inquire,

II. WHEN ſpiritual life is communicated?—To this the ſcriptures direct us to anſwer, That it is communicated in that change which is generally called Regeneration, or Effectual Calling. This is more than intimated by the expreſſions uſed to ſignify the firſt communication of it. When ſpiritual life is infuſed, then it is that God is ſaid to *beget us again to a lively hope*, 1 Pet. i. 3. to *beget us of his own will*, James i. 18. to *quicken us, who were dead in ſin*, Eph. ii. 5. to *give us a new heart, and put a new ſpirit within us; to take away the ſtony heart, and give an heart of fleſh*, Ezek. xxxvi. 26. and we are ſaid to be *created in Chriſt Jeſus unto good works*, Eph. ii. 10. *born again*, John iii. 3. *born or begotten of God*, John i. 13. 1 John iii. 9. Now it is evident that theſe metaphorical expreſſions ſignify what is commonly called Regeneration, and that they expreſs the firſt implantation of ſpiritual life. Several of them contain a direct alluſion to the firſt communication of animal and human life, as generation or begetting, regeneration or being begotten again, creation, &c. And ſince theſe, taken literally, ſignify the firſt communication of natural life, they muſt, when uſed metaphorically and ſpiritually, ſignify the firſt communication of ſpiritual life. Life

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before generation, creation, &c. is an abſurdity; and generation, creation, &c. without the communication of life ſuitable to the nature of the being generated, created, &c. is alſo an abſurdity. The other expreſſions, as *quickening us while dead in treſpaſſes and ſins, giving a new heart*, and the like, even literally ſignify this.

Hence, by way of improvement, we may be inſtructed to avoid a common miſtake; namely, "That a power of living to God is univerſally conferred upon mankind in creation; and therefore that there is no need of a new ſupernatural principle to be infuſed, but only of the concurrence of common providence, and the inſtitutes of the goſpel, to poliſh and refine our natural principles. And ſome ſay, "That God in creation infuſes ſpiritual life into all, on account of Chriſt's dying for them; and that if it be given without the merit of the recipient, it may as properly be aſcribed to divine grace when it is a natural endowment beſtowed in creation, as it would be if it were a ſupernatural gift communicated by an act diſtinct from and poſterior to that of creation."

In order effectually to ſubvert this notion, conſider, 1. If ſpiritual life were communicated in creation, there would be no propriety or ſignificancy in the expreſſions uſed to denote the communication of it. There would be no need of a new, a ſecond birth, if we were ſpiritually alive by virtue of our firſt birth. Were we holy by virtue of our firſt creation, what neceſſity of being *created in Chriſt Jeſus*, or of being made *new creatures?* 2 Cor. v. 17. Gal. vi. 15. There could be no oppoſition between the *old man and the new.* Rom. vi. 6. Eph. iv. 22, 24. Col. iii. 9, 10. The diſpoſitions concreated with us cannot be called a new man.—2. The implantation of ſpiritual life is not only poſterior to creation, but alſo to corrupt principles, which are innate. We are firſt *dead in ſin before we are quickened*, Eph. ii. 5. we have a *ſtony heart*, which muſt be taken away before a *heart of fleſh* is given, Ezek. xxxvi. 26. Such expreſſions undoubtedly

edly ſignify and act poſterior to, and conſequently diſtinct from creation.—3. The implantation of a principle of ſpiritual life is eminently an act of ſpecial grace, which the concreation of our natural endowments is never ſaid to be. *The waſhing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghoſt*, is an act of mercy, and the effect of *the kindneſs and love of God our Saviour.* Tit. iii. 5. *God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in ſins, hath quickened us together with Chriſt (by grace ye are ſaved.)* Eph. ii. 4, 5. It is according to God's *abundant mercy, that we are begotten again unto a lively hope.* 1 Pet. i. 3. But what need I multiply inſtances? The entire tenor of the goſpel directs us to aſcribe the regeneration and ſanctification of ſinners to diſtinguiſhing and peculiar grace. But though our natural powers are the free communications of divine goodneſs, yet we are never ſaid to be "created according to the grace and mercy of God." It is not agreeable to the ſacred dialect to call the powers of reaſon, viſion, &c. "the gifts of grace," in the ſame ſenſe that ſpiritual life is ſo called: nay, I cannot find that our natural powers are aſcribed to mercy, grace, free grace, at all; and it ſeems more congruous to aſcribe them to other perfections of the Deity, as creative wiſdom, power and goodneſs. To this I may add, that ſpiritual life is always repreſented as communicated "thro' Chriſt as Mediator, and for his ſake;" but our natural endowments are not ſaid to be given through him. *The Holy Ghoſt is ſhed on us abundantly through Jeſus Chriſt our Saviour.* Tit. iii. 5, 6. *We are ſanctified through the offering up of the body of Chriſt once for all.* Heb. x. 10. *It is in Chriſt Jeſus that we are bleſſed with all ſpiritual bleſſings.* Eph. i. 3. *He is made ſatisfaction to us,* 1 Cor. i. 30. *and of his fulneſs we all receive.* John i. 16. But we are never ſaid to be created for Chriſt's ſake, or to be made rational creatures on the account of his righteouſneſs. And, when we are ſaid to be

created by him, it ſignifies by him as an efficient, not as a meritorious cauſe.

From all which it appears, that ſpiritual life in a fallen creature is wholly ſupernatural: it is of a divine extract, and heaven-born in a peculiar ſenſe. The ſons of God *are born of God, and not of blood, nor of the will of the fleſh, nor of the will of man.* If therefore any of us continue in our natural eſtate, we are dead in ſin, however ſtrict formaliſts, or refined moraliſts we may be.—Let us inquire,

III. "Whether ſpiritual life be inſtantaneouſly communicated? Or, whether (as ſome alledge) it be gradually acquired by repeated acts?"

Here let it be obſerved, that we are not inquiring, how ſpiritual life is nouriſhed and confirmed? for that is undoubtedly done gradually, by repeated acts, correſpondent to the nature of ſpiritual life, and perfective of it in the progreſs of ſanctification, as the power of reaſon is improved by a ſeries of ſuitable exerciſes; but our inquiry is, How it is firſt obtained? Whether it be communicated in the inſtant of regeneration, as the power of underſtanding is in creation? And to this I anſwer affirmatively, for the following reaſons.

1. "It is a contradiction that it ſhould be originally acquired by acting, or a ſeries of acts;" for that ſuppoſes that it exiſts, and does not exiſt, at the ſame time: as it acts, it exiſts; and as it is acquired by acting, it does not exiſt. It will perhaps be objected, "That it may be acquired by the repeated acts of another kind of life, namely, rational; or the exerciſes of our rational powers about ſpiritual objects." But this may be anſwered from what was obſerved under the firſt head, namely, That a principle of ſpiritual life is ſomething diſtinct from and ſuperadded to our natural powers. Now the acts of one kind of life, however often repeated, will never acquire a life of a quite different kind: *e. g.* The longeſt courſe, and the moſt frequent repetition of animal acts, will never acquire

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a principle of reaſon. Let a blind man hear ever ſo well, and ever ſo frequently, that will not acquire a viſive faculty. So let our natural principles be exerciſed about ſpiritual objects with ever ſo much frequency and permanency, that will never acquire ſpiritual life. They are ſo depraved, that there remains nothing in them out of which it can be educed, without the communication of ſomething ſupernatural. Be they ever ſo ſtrong and active, they can contribute no more to our vivification, than the quick ſenſation of the auditory nerve can contribute to the acquiſition of ſight. Principles of action may be confirmed, and rendered more prompt to act, by frequent exerciſe; but can never be originally obtained that way.

2. The terms whereby the communication of ſpiritual life is ſignified, as begetting, creating, quickening, or raiſing the dead, &c. denote an inſtantaneous communication.

3. Spiritual life is repreſented as prior to and the ſource and principle of all acts of evangelical holineſs; and conſequently it cannot be gradually acquired by ſuch acts, but muſt be implanted previouſly to the putting forth of any ſuch acts; as reaſon is not acquired by reaſoning, but is a pre-requiſite and principle of all the acts of reaſon. We are *created in Chriſt Jeſus*, to make us capable of *good works*. Eph. ii. 10. We muſt have *a new heart and a new ſpirit, and the ſpirit of God be put within us, that we may walk in God's ſtatutes, and keep his judgments, and do them*. Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27. We muſt be *drawn of the Father*, muſt *hear and learn of him*, before we *can come to Chriſt*. John iv. 44, 45. God gives his people *one heart, and one way, that they may fear Him for ever. He puts his fear in their hearts*, before they ceaſe *to depart from Him*. Jer. xxxii. 39, 40. Now if all acts of holineſs be the effects of a vital principle of holineſs previouſly infuſed, then this principle is not acquired by a courſe of actions, and conſequently it is not gradually acquired, but inſtantaneouſly infuſed; for that which is not acquired by

by acting is obtained by immediate communication from another, and therefore it does not take up time to obtain it, as a ſeries of acts does. Again, There muſt be a firſt act of holineſs; for if there be not a firſt, there cannot be a ſecond, *&c.* Now ſince a principle of ſpiritual life is the ſpring, and the beginning of all acts of holineſs, it muſt be, in order of nature, prior to the firſt act of holineſs; and conſequently it is not gradually acquired by ſuch acts, but precedes them all, and therefore muſt be inſtantaneouſly infuſed.

Hence we may ſee the vanity of that religion which is gained in the ſame manner that a man learns a trade, or an uncultivated mind becomes knowing and learned, namely, by the repeated exerciſes of our natural powers in the uſe of proper means, and under the aids of common providence. We have ſeen that a principle of ſpiritual life is not a good act, nor a ſeries of good acts, nor any thing acquirable by them, but the ſpring and origin of all good acts. Let us then, my brethren, try whether our religion will ſtand this teſt.

Hence alſo we may learn a conſiderable difference between what is commonly called Morality and Goſpel-Holineſs. The one is obtained, as other acquired habits are, by frequent and continued exerciſes; the other proceeds from a principle divinely implanted. Our

IV. Inquiry is, "Who are the ſubjects of ſpiritual life? or, In what extent is it communicated?

The anſwer to this is eaſy, from what has been already offered; for ſince it is communicated only in regeneration, then the regenerate only are the ſubjects of it; and ſince all men are not regenerate, then all men are not the ſubjects of it. Again, Since it is ſomething diſtinct from and ſuperadded to our rational powers, then it cannot be proved that all that are endowed with rationality are the ſubjects of it. Again, Since it is communicated by an act diſtinct from and poſterior to creation, there is no reaſon to conclude that

that it is co-extended with creation, or with the bounds of humanity. And ſince all theſe things are ſo, we may ſafely conclude, negatively, That it is not communicated to mankind univerſally and poſitively; that it is communicated to all the regenerate, and to them only. Hence reſult two corollaries.

1. That there is no ſuch thing as univerſal grace ſufficient to qualify all men to ſerve God acceptably, without the ſupernatural communication of diſtinguiſhing grace; for *God is a Spirit, and they that worſhip him muſt worſhip him in ſpirit and in truth.* John iv. 24. Thoſe acts which do not proceed from a principle of ſpiritual life, will no more be accounted by Him vital, ſpiritual acts, than the chattering of a parrot, or the ſeemingly rational pranks of an ape, will paſs with a man of ſenſe for human actions: and without a principle of ſpiritual life there can be no ſpiritual acts, as there can be no rational acts without a principle of reaſon. And ſince, as has been ſhewn, ſpiritual life is not univerſally communicated, then there is no ſufficient grace univerſally communicated; for the latter neceſſarily implies the former, and cannot be without it.

2. We may obſerve further, That the "beſt actions of the unregenerate are not properly and formally good, and acceptable to God." It is true their performing the duties of religion and virtue, in the beſt manner they are capable of, is leſs diſpleaſing to God than the wilful neglect of them, or the commiſſion of the contrary ſins, and therefore they ſhould endeavour to perform them; but yet it cannot be ſaid to be poſitively pleaſing to him. It is not the act materially, or in itſelf, that is ſinful, but formally, and as done by them, *e. g.* They do not ſin as far as they pray, but as far as they pray in a ſinful manner, without a gracious principle, without faith, and other requiſites to acceptable prayer. *They aſk, and receive not, becauſe they aſk amiſs.* James iv. 3. *So then, they that are in the fleſh cannot pleaſe God.* Rom. viii. 8. A tremendous thought to the unregenerate! Their whole life is an entire

entire ſeries of provocation; one continued act of rebellion againſt the great King of Heaven.

V. Our next inquiry is, "In what ſenſe is ſpiritual life communicated and ſupported through Chriſt?"

To explain and illuſtrate this point, let theſe three things be conſidered:

1. That "by the ſin of our firſt parents and repreſentatives, our principle of ſpiritual life was forfeited, and the forfeiture is continued, and ſpiritual death brought on us by our perſonal ſin."

That Adam was conſtituted the repreſentative of his poſterity, and conſequently that his ſin is imputed to them, I ſhall take for granted, not having time to prove it. And if this be granted, then we are deſtitute of ſpiritual life; for, That diſobedience may be puniſhed, conſiſtently with reaſon and juſtice, by the judicial privation of our power to obey, cannot be denied, if theſe reaſonable *poſtulata* be conceded: That it is conſiſtent with the juſtice and goodneſs of the Deity to ſuſpend the continuance of the powers of upright moral agency conferred upon his creatures, on the condition of their right improvement of them: That when ſuch powers are abuſed and miſimproved, they may juſtly be withdrawn: And that, when withdrawn in conſequence of their being forfeited by a criminal miſimprovement, God is not obliged in juſtice to reſtore them. Now theſe *poſtulata* imply no contradiction, and, therefore, may have been matters of fact; and they are implied in the ſcripture-repreſentation of the circumſtance of Adam and his poſterity, as related to him; and therefore were matters of fact, and conſequently Adam and his poſterity, on the account of his ſin, actually are, at leaſt juſtly might me, deprived of ſpiritual life.

As to our perſonal ſin, it contributes two ways to deprive us of ſpiritual life, morally and phyſically; morally, in the ſame ſenſe that Adam's ſin does, as it involves us in guilt, and ſo infers the judicial privation of the imperfect relics of our Maker's moral image; and

and phyſically, as every act, and eſpecially a ſeries of acts, naturally tends to ſtrengthen and encourage the principle from whence they flow; to acquire that facility in acting which is called a habit; and to weaken and extirpate all contrary principles, and ſo indiſpoſe for the exertion of contrary acts.

Hence it follows, that in order to the reſtoration of ſpiritual life, the moral influence of ſin muſt be removed by making a competent ſatisfaction to divine juſtice, to redeem the bleſſing forfeited; and its phyſical influence obſtructed by purchaſing and communicating divine influences, to weaken and extirpate the principles of ſin, and that fatal promptitude and facility of acting which is contracted by the frequent exerciſe of them; and to infuſe an oppoſite principle of holineſs, and mature it into an habit. And this introduces the other two things intended; and therefore,

2. The Lord Jeſus, by his ſufferings, made a "complete ſatisfaction to divine juſtice;" and thereby redeemed the bleſſing forfeited; and by the merit of his obedience, purchaſed divine influence for the extirpation of the principles of ſpiritual death which lurk in our natures, and the implantation of holineſs. Hence the regeneration and ſanctification, as well as the ſalvation of his people, are aſcribed to his merits and death. We are *ſanctified through the offering up of the body of Chriſt.* Heb. x. 10. And *the blood of Chriſt, who through the eternal Spirit offered up himſelf, without ſpot, to God, purges the conſcience from dead works to ſerve the living God.* Heb. ix. 14. *He gave himſelf for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himſelf a peculiar people, zealous of good works.* Titus ii. 14. Hence our *old man* is ſaid to be *crucified with him,* Rom. vi. 6. and we to be *quickened together with him.* Col. ii. 13. Therefore it is only on the account of his righteouſneſs that ſpiritual life is firſt given, and afterwards maintained and cheriſhed. God acts, in the whole affair, as the God of grace, with a diſtinct reference to the mediation of Chriſt.

3. Chriſt

3. Chriſt, the Purchaſer, is appointed alſo "the Communicator of ſpiritual life" to his people. *The Son quickeneth whom he will.* John v. 21. *He is exalted as a prince to give repentance to Iſrael.* Acts v. 31. *He is our life,* Col. iii. 3, 4. *and the Author and Finiſher of our faith.* Heb. xii. 2. In a word, *all power in heaven and on earth is given to him,* Matt. xxix. 18. a ſovereign empire of grace, founded in his own blood, is devolved upon him, and *He is given to be head over all things to his church;* Eph. i. 22. a head not only of government, but of quickening influence; for *from him all the body by joints and bands having nouriſhment miniſtered and knit together, increaſeth with the increaſe of God.* Col. ii. 19. It is therefore by his own hands that all the bleſſings, purchaſed by his blood are communicated.

Hence, for the particular improvement of this head, let believers be taught to look to the Lord Jeſus, the great Treaſurer of heaven, for the ſupplies of his grace to ſupport and nouriſh their ſpiritual life. Poor things! You are weak in yourſelves, but his *grace is ſufficient for you, and his ſtrength ſhall be made perfect in your weakneſs.* "Ye are complete in him," therefore "be ſtrong in the grace that is in Chriſt Jeſus; ſtrong in the Lord, and in the power of his might! Come up out of the wilderneſs, leaning upon your beloved. Be of good courage, and he will ſtrengthen your heart." Do not indulge a daſtardly temper, nor harbour diffident and deſponding fears: For, "have you not known? Have you not heard, that the everlaſting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might he increaſeth ſtrength." If you "compaſs yourſelves with ſparks of your own kindling," your devotions will be cold and languid, and a deadly chilline's will benumb your ſpirit. Place yourſelves, therefore, under the vivifying beams "of the ſun of righteouſneſs, and you ſhall go forth and grow up as calves of the ſtall."

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And let "the ſlain of the daughter of my people" apply to him for quickening grace. Behold, ſinners! your Phyſician; cry after him; plead for life. See the great treaſury of vivifying influence; ſtand at the door knocking, begging and weeping, and never depart till you can ſay, "I return a living ſoul." Here is a fountain of life opened, and *let him that is athirſt, come; and whoſoever will, let him take the water of life freely.* But I haſten to inquire,

VI. "How Faith derives ſupplies from Chriſt for the ſupport and nouriſhment of ſpiritual life?"

I ſhall proceed to the ſolution of this by the following gradation.

1. The communication of grace from Chriſt to maintain and nouriſh ſpiritual life in his people, is a peculiar and diſtinguiſhing communication. It is appropriated to them and not promiſcuouſly diſpenſed to mankind in general. So animal ſpirits and nervous juices, are communicated from the head to that particular body to which it belongs, and to none other. So a vine conveys nutritive and prolific ſap to its own branches, excluſive of all others. It may, indeed, be of ſervice to other things in other reſpects, as for ſhade, the entertainment of the ſight, &c. but in this reſpect it ſupplies its own branches only. Thus Chriſt ſheds his extenſive influence on the whole creation; for *by him all things conſiſt;* but that particular kind and degree of influence, whereby believers are quickened and kept alive, is peculiarly appropriated to them.

2. It is fit and neceſſary there ſhould be a peculiar union betwixt Chriſt and his people, as the foundation of this peculiar influence.

Spiritual life, as to its infuſion and preſervation, proceeds from the Lord-Mediator, both morally and phyſically. Morally, from the merit of his obedience and ſufferings, whereby it was purchaſed; and phyſically, from his operation, whereby it is effected. And in both theſe views, it is congruous and neceſſary that it ſhould ſuppoſe a ſpecial union with him.

As it reſults morally from his merit, it is fit there ſhould be a ſpecial legal union, as the foundation of it. Chriſt and his people muſt be actually "one in law," before they can be actually intitled to or receive and enjoy the bleſſings purchaſed by his obedience to the law. So a wife muſt be made legally one with her huſband, by a conjugal union, in order to intitle her to and give her the poſſeſſion of his eſtate. An inſolvent debtor muſt be legally one with his ſurety, that the ſurety's diſcharge of the debt may procure his acquittance.

And as the ſpiritual life proceeds phyſically from his agency, it is neceſſary there ſhould be a previous ſpecial union, as the reaſon of the termination of that agency upon the believer rather than upon another. This muſt be a real, though ſpiritual union, as the communication of vital influences flowing from it, is real though ſpiritual. Wherever there is a ſpecial communication of influence, there is always a ſpecial union, as the ſource and foundation of it. So the peculiar influence of the ſoul upon the body, of the head upon the members, ſuppoſes that they are peculiarly united.

Accordingly, the ſcriptures repreſent a peculiar union betwixt Chriſt and his people, which is not betwixt him and the reſt of mankind, to whom he does not communicate ſpiritual life. *I am the vine*, ſays he to his diſciples, *and ye are the branches: he that abideth in me, and I in him, the ſame bringeth forth much fruit; for without me ye can do nothing.* John xv. 5. To the ſame purport elſewhere, *I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one.* John xvii. 23. This is intimated, when the relation betwixt Chriſt and his people is repreſented by a conjugal union. They *are become dead to the law by the body of Chriſt, that they ſhould be married to another, even to him who is raiſed from the dead.* Rom. vii. 4. *They are members of his body, of his fleſh, and of his bones.* Eph. v. 28, 32. But it is moſt plainly aſſerted in thoſe paſſages where Jeſus is repreſented

repreſented as the head, the church collectively as his body, and particular believers as the members of his body. *As the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body; ſo alſo is Chriſt* myſtical. *For by one Spirit we are all baptized,* or initiated, *into one body. Now ye are the body of Chriſt, and members in particular.* 1 Cor. xii. 12—27. *God gave him to be head over all things to his church, which is his body.* Eph. i. 22, 23. See alſo Eph. iv. 15, 16. Col. ii. 19.

3. It is fit that *that* grace which has a peculiar concurrence or inſtrumentality in the uniting of the ſoul to Chriſt, and in continuing of that union, ſhould alſo have a "peculiar concurrence or inſtrumentality in deriving ſupplies of ſpiritual ſtrength from him;" for ſince union is the true ſpecial ground of the communication, it is fit that that which is the peculiar inſtrument or bond of this union, ſhould alſo be the peculiar inſtrument of receiving, or vehicle of communicating vital influences. Now,

4. Faith has a "peculiar concurrence or "inſtrumentality in the firſt union" of the ſoul to Chriſt, and the conſequent continuation of the union. It is the grand ligament whereby they are indiſſolubly conjoined. It is true, the ſpiritual man, as well as our animal bodies, conſiſts of ſeveral eſſential parts. Repentance, love, and the whole ſyſtem of evangelical graces and moral virtues are as neceſſary, in their proper reſpective places, as faith: But then faith has a peculiar aptitude, above all other graces and virtues, for performing the part we now appropriate to it. So heart, lungs, bowels, &c. are eſſential to the human body, as well as nerves and arteries; but the nerves are the peculiar vehicles to carry the vital ſpirits from the brain; and the arteries are the only conveyancers of the blood from the heart, through many labyrinths, to the whole body.

Faith, in a ſpecial manner, implies thoſe things in its very nature, which reaſon directs us to look upon

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as ſuitable pre-requiſites or concomitants of deriving vital influence from Chriſt. For inſtance, It is fit that all that receive ſpiritual life as a bleſſing of the covenant of grace, ſhould ſubmit to and acquieſce in the terms of that covenant. Now ſuch a ſubmiſſion and acquieſcence is faith. It is fit, all that derive ſtrength from Chriſt ſhould be brought to place a humble, ſelf-diffident dependance upon him for it, conſcious of their own weakneſs. Now faith principally conſiſts in ſuch a dependance, and therefore is ſo often called *a truſting in the Lord.*

Moreover, the ſacred oracles aſſert the peculiar inſtrumentality of faith in this matter. *Chriſt* is ſaid to *dwell in our hearts by faith*, Eph. iii. 17. and it is by *believing in his name that we receive power to become the the ſons of God.* John i. 12. He himſelf tells us, *He that eateth my fleſh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me and I in him. As I live by the Father, ſo he that eateth me, ſhall live by me.* John vi. 56, 57. And by eating his fleſh and drinking his blood, is undoubtedly meant faith in him; and conſequently it is by faith believers are nouriſhed.

For the particular improvement of this head, I ſhall make theſe three remarks:

1. That a ſaving faith is always operative; and what renders it ſo is its conſtant dependance on Chriſt for quickening grace. It is deſigned by God, and has a peculiar aptitude in its own nature to derive ſtrength for all acts of holineſs from Chriſt; and he will not deny any of the influences it naturally craves! He is a living head, and will not ſuffer any of his members to languiſh under perpetual mortal decays, or drudge away their lives in ſucceſsleſs toils, or ſupinely waſte them in ſloth and inactivity. He will fail none that truſt in him; but their dependance on him will be like the leaning of the ivy on the oak, or the radication of a tree in a fruitful ſoil, an aſſured method to obtain ſupport and nouriſhment. So far is a dependance on him from leading to ſloth and libertiniſm, as ſome ſlanderouſly ſurmiſe.

2. We

2. We infer, that *without faith, it is impoſſible to pleaſe God.* It has been ſhewn, that without union to Chriſt we cannot have an actual intereſt in his righteouſneſs, or be the ſpecial objects of that quickening influence, whereby the ſpiritual life and activity of his people is maintained; and without theſe, our perſons or performances cannot be accepted, unleſs our own righteouſneſs be ſufficient, without an actual intereſt in his, to procure the pardon of ſin, and reinſtate us in the divine favour; and unleſs human nature, labouring under the maladies of its preſent degeneracy, be capable, without the ſpecial aids of divine grace, to yield ſuitable obedience to the law: neither of which can be aſſerted, without virtually renouncing the whole goſpel. And we have ſeen, that faith has ſo important a place in the unition of the ſoul with Chriſt, and conſequently, in intitling us to his righteouſneſs, and deriving vital influences from him, that without it we cannot be at all united to him, or ſhare in the happy conſequences of this union, no more than there can be a circulation of the blood without veins and arteries.

3. We obſerve that goſpel-holineſs may be diſtinguiſhed from all counterfeits, and particularly from what ſome dignify with the name of morality, by this criterion, that it preſuppoſes a ſpecial union with Chriſt, and is cheriſhed in the heart, and exerciſed in practice, by virtue of the quickening influences flowing from him, as the head of his church, and received by faith; whereas mere morality does not neceſſarily ſuppoſe ſuch an union, but may reſult from our natural powers, under the common influences of divine providence.

I ſhall conclude with a ſhort general improvement of the whole ſubject, in the following inferences:

1. That the reaſon why religion is ſo burdenſome to many is, becauſe they are "deſtitute of a principle of ſpiritual life," and the "quickening communications of divine grace." Conſtrained by ſelf-love, they drudge and toil in religious duties, and cry, "What a wea-

a wearineſs is it!" Or impatient of ſo diſagreeable a burden, they neglect them entirely. Religion is not natural to them, for want of a new nature. But *to you that believe, Chriſt is precious; all his ways are pleaſantneſs, and all his paths are peace.* His *yoke is eaſy, and* his *burden light.*

2. Let us examine ourſelves, whether the evidences of ſpiritual life, which may be collected from what has been ſaid, give us reaſon to conclude that we are poſſeſſed of it. Let us caſt the diſcourſe into a form of interrogation, and propoſe the following inquiries to our conſciences.

Do we feel, or have we felt a ſupernatural principle working within? Is our religion heaven-born? or is it natural and ſelf-ſprung? Is the habitual bent of our wills God-ward? Do our hearts propend towards Him, as their ultimate ſcope? Do we *delight in his law after the inner man, and will that which is good, even when we cannot do it?* Do we perceive ourſelves at times *ſtrengthened with might in the inner man?* And that we *can do all things through Chriſt ſtrengthening us?* Have we ever experienced the important change of regeneration? are *old things paſſed away, and all things become new?* Have we *put off the old man with his deeds, and put on the new man, which after God is created in righteouſneſs and true holineſs?*

Is our religion more than a mere acquired habit, originally obtained by our own induſtry only, and the exerciſe of our natural powers, excited and aſſiſted by education, cuſtom, the means of grace? &c. Was it begun in the inſtantaneous infuſion of a gracious principle, immediately by the Holy Spirit?

Do we derive our ſtrength for obedience from Chriſt by faith? Is he *our life?* Are we generally crying, *Lord we have no ſtrength; but our eyes are unto thee?* Can we ſay with the apoſtle, *I live; yet not I, but Chriſt liveth in me; and what I now live in the fleſh, I live by the faith of the Son of God?*

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My dear brethren, let us ſearch ourſelves with theſe and the like inquiries; for many are deſtructively deceived in this matter. Living religion is wrapt in darkneſs from the eyes of moſt: they either place it in that in which it does not conſiſt at all, or take the circumſtances and appendages for the ſubſtance of it. *Great is the myſtery of godlineſs*, not only objectively, as revealed in the ſcriptures, but alſo ſubjectively, as wrought in the heart of a believer. It ought therefore to engage our moſt ſerious and intenſe thoughts.

3. Let thoſe who are made ſpiritually alive, "acknowledge and admire the diſtinguiſhing grace of God, and act as it becomes their character."

You have ſeen that ſpiritual life is not promiſcuouſly diſpenſed to mankind in general, but only to the regenerate, who are comparatively few. And can you reſtrain your wonder, that you ſhould be the choſen objects of ſovereign grace? or avoid breaking forth into extatic praiſes at ſo ſurprizing a diſpenſation?

Moreover, the deſign of your vivification, and the natural tendency of the principle of ſpiritual life is, that you may live to God; and therefore, you are peculiarly obliged to make your whole life a ſeries of obedience to Him. Indulge the propenſions and tendencies of the new nature: obey and cheriſh all the impulſes and motions of the divine principle within you. To offer violence to the new man, to cramp and fetter its powers, to reſiſt its motions, and ſuffocate its heavenly aſpirations, is the moſt horrid crime. It is to attempt to murder the child of grace in embryo; and ſure, this is the worſt of murder. *Reckon ye yourſelves, then, to be dead indeed unto ſin, but alive unto God, through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord. Let not ſin reign in your mortal body, that ye ſhould obey it in the luſts thereof: neither yield ye your members as inſtruments of unrighteouſneſs unto ſin; but yield yourſelves unto God, as thoſe that are alive from the dead; and your members as inſtruments of righteouſneſs unto God.* And *if ye be riſen with Chriſt, ſeek thoſe things which are above, where Chriſt ſitteth*

teth at the right hand of God. Set your affections upon (ſavour and reliſh) *things above, not things on earth. And when Chriſt, who is our life, ſhall appear, then ſhall ye alſo appear with him in glory.*

4. I requeſt and importune thoſe that are dead in ſin, to "uſe all proper means for the obtaining of quickening grace." The exhortation implies no contradiction or impoſſibility; for though they are ſpiritually dead, yet their natural principles of reaſon is ſtill alive, and capable of exerciſing itſelf about ſpiritual objects; and God has enjoined them to make the beſt uſe they can of it, as the only way to obtain a better principle. God deals with us according to our nature and circumſtances. We are corrupted creatures, and therefore He exerts his exceeding great and mighty power to work principles of holineſs in us; but ſtill we are rational creatures, and therefore He uſes the powers of moral ſuaſion with us, and juſtly requires us to exert our rational faculties in all the inſtitutions of the goſpel.

Be perſuaded then, ſinner, no longer to lie ſtill in ſecurity; but *ariſe, call upon thy God; if ſo be that God will think upon thee, that thou periſh not. Lazarus! come forth. Awake thou that ſleepeſt, and ariſe from the dead; and Chriſt ſhall give thee light.* Linger not, leſt eternal death overtake thee. Methinks I ſee him juſt at thy heels, for *thy damnation now of a long time ſlumbereth not.* Ariſe, come forth at the call of the goſpel; otherwiſe how wilt thou ſtand the ſhocking terror of that final alarm, *Awake ye dead, and come to judgment?* But I muſt conclude with my hearty wiſh, *That the hour may come,* and O! that this may be the hour, *in which the dead ſhall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear ſhall live.*—Which gracious prediction may the God of grace accompliſh upon us all, for Jeſus' ſake. Amen.

SERMON

SERMON LI.

THE *WAYS* OF *SIN* HARD AND DIFFICULT.

ACTS iv. 6. *It is hard for thee to kick againſt the pricks.*

YOU often hear of the narrow and rugged road of religion, which leadeth unto life; and ſome of you, I am afraid, have not courage enough to venture upon it. You rather chooſe the ſmooth, broad, down-hill road of vice and pleaſure, though it leads down to the chambers of death. It muſt be owned, that a religious life is a courſe of difficulties, a hard ſtruggle, a conſtant conflict; and it is fit you ſhould be honeſtly informed of it: but then it is fit you ſhould alſo know, that the difficulties ariſe not from the nature of religion, but from the corruption and depravity of the nature of man in its preſent degenerate ſtate. A courſe of religion is diſagreeable, is hard, is difficult to mankind; juſt as a courſe of action is difficult to the ſick, though it is eaſy, and affords pleaſure to thoſe that are well. There are difficulties in the way of ſin as well as in that of holineſs, though the depravity of mankind renders them inſenſible of it. This is the view of the caſe I would now lay before you. There is a ſenſe, in which it is true, that it is a hard thing to be a ſinner, as well as to be a ſaint: there are huge difficulties in the way, to hell, as well as in the way to heaven. And if you are inſenſible of them, it is owing, as I juſt obſerved, to the corruption of your nature, and not to the real eaſineſs of the thing in itſelf. It may be eaſy and pleaſing to you to ſin, juſt as it is eaſy to a dead body to rot, or pleaſing to a leper to rub his ſores. But to a reaſonable creature, in a ſtate of purity, with all his powers uncorrupted, it

would indeed be an unpleaſing, a hard, a difficult thing to take that courſe which is ſo eaſy and ſo delightful to you; as it is hard and painful for a living man to ſuffer the mortification of his limbs, or for a healthy man to make himſelf ſore. If it be hard, in one ſenſe, to live a life of holineſs, it is certainly hard, in another ſenſe, to live a life of ſin; namely, to run againſt conſcience, againſt reaſon, againſt honour, againſt intereſt, againſt all the ſtrong and endearing obligations you are under to God, to mankind, and to yourſelves: or, in the words of my text, *it is hard for you to kick againſt the pricks.*

This is a proverb in uſe among various nations, which has received a ſanction from heaven in this text. It is uſed by Pindar, Euripides, and Æſchylus, among the Greeks; and by Terence, among the Latins: and from the ſenſe in which they uſe it, we are helped to underſtand it. *To kick againſt the pricks*, is an alluſion to a lazy or unruly plough-horſe or ox, that when pricked with a goad (an inſtrument uſed in ploughing, in ſundry places, inſtead of a whip) refuſes to go on, and ſpurns and kicks againſt the goad, and ſo wounds himſelf, and not the driver. In ſuch circumſtances, it is much harder to kick againſt the goads, and reſiſt, than to go on: if he goes on, he need not fear the goad; but his reſiſtance only hurts himſelf. It is to this that the phraſe alludes; and it ſignifies a reſiſtance injurious to the perſon that makes it, when it would be both eaſy and advantageous to obey.

Hence we may learn the preciſe ſenſe in which it is uſed by the mouth of Chriſt, in this pungent addreſs to Saul the perſecutor, whom we now know under the higher name of Paul the apoſtle.

Saul, animated with a furious, miſguided, though honeſt zeal, againſt the diſciples of Jeſus, was now on his way to Damaſcus in purſuit of them; and had a commiſſion from the higheſt court of the Jews to apprehend them: a commiſſion which he was impatient to execute. This, in human view, was a very unpromiſing

promiſing hour for his converſion; now it appears more likely that vengeance will arreſt him as a criminal, than that grace will prevent him as a veſſel of mercy. But O! what agreeable exploits of grace has Jeſus performed! At the firſt introduction of his religion, it was fit he ſhould ſingle out ſome great ſinner, and make him a monument of his mercy, for the encouragement of future ages. Therefore he ſurprizes this fierce perſecutor in his daring career, darts the ſplendors of his glory around him, and pierces him to the heart with this irreſiſtible expoſtulation, *Saul, Saul, why perſecuteſt thou me?* Saul, in a trembling conſternation, replies, *Who art thou Lord?* He thought he was only bringing to juſtice a parcel of contemptible, blaſphemous ſectaries, unworthy of toleration; and little did he think that his perſecuting zeal reached ſo high: little did he expect to hear one crying from the throne of heaven, *Why perſecuteſt thou me?* But Jeſus feels and reſents the injuries done to his people, as done to himſelf. The head ſympathizes with its members; therefore he anſwers, *I am Jeſus, whom thou perſecuteſt.* And then follows my text, *It is hard for thee to kick againſt the pricks. q. d.* "Since it is Jeſus, whom thou perſecuteſt, the injury done to me will only rebound upon thyſelf: I am infinitely advanced beyond the reach of thy rage; and even my people, who now ſeem in thy power, can ſuffer no real or laſting injury from it in the iſſue; for under my management, all things ſhall work for their good, but thy perſecuting fury ſhall prove ruinous to thyſelf; as the wild ox that ſpurns and kicks againſt the goad hurts himſelf, and not the driver." Thus, as I told you, this proverb ſignifies a reſiſtance injurious to the perſon reſiſting, and harmleſs to him againſt whom it is made. And is not this hard? Is it not an arduous, prepoſterous exploit to break through the ſtrong reſtraints of the innate principle of ſelf-preſervation, and ruin one's ſelf by a blow intended againſt another, beyond the reach of injury? This, one would think, is

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a piece of folly and cruelty, of which a being that has the leaſt remains of reaſon or ſelf-love, would be incapable.

This proverb may ſignify more: *q. d. I am Jeſus, whom thou perſecuteſt;* Jeſus, the Lord of glory: Jeſus, the Saviour of ſinners; Jeſus, who had died for ſuch ſinners as thee; Jeſus, who is all love and mercy, excellency, and glory; Jeſus, who has given thee ſuch ſufficient evidence of his divine miſſion, and the truth of his religion; and canſt thou perſecute Jeſus? O! is this an eaſy thing to one that has the leaſt reaſon or gratitude? Art thou able to break through ſuch ſtrong and endearing obligations? Is it not hard for thee to ſpurn againſt one ſo great, ſo glorious, ſo gracious and condeſcending? Muſt not this be a horrid exploit of wickedneſs beyond thy power?"

That I may the more fully illuſtrate the ſtriking thought ſuggeſted by my text, I ſhall point out to you ſome ſeemingly inſuperable obſtacles in the way to hell, or ſome dire exploits, which, one would think, would be too hard for you to perform, which yet you muſt perform, if you perſiſt in a courſe of ſin.

1. Is it not a hard thing to be an unbeliever, or a Deiſt, in our age and country, while the light of the goſpel ſhines around us with full blaze of evidence!

Before a man can work up himſelf to the diſbelief of a religion attended with ſuch undeniable evidence, and inſpiring ſuch divine diſpoſitions and exalted hopes, what abſurdities muſt he embrace! what ſtrong convictions muſt he reſiſt! what dark ſuſpicions, what boding fears and miſgivings, what ſhocking peradventures and tremendous doubts muſt he ſtruggle with! what glorious hopes muſt he reſign! what gloomy and ſhocking proſpects muſt he reconcile himſelf to! what violence muſt be offered to conſcience! what care muſt be uſed to ſhut up all the avenues of ſerious thought, and harden the heart againſt the terrors of death, and the ſupreme tribunal! How painful a piece of prepoſterous ſelf-denial to reject the balm the goſpel

pel provides to heal a broken heart and a bleeding conſcience, and the various helps and advantages it furniſhes us with to obtain divine favour and everlaſting happineſs! How hard to work up the mind to believe that Jeſus, who ſpoke and acted, and ſuffered, and did every thing, like an incarnate God, was an impoſtor, or at beſt a moral philoſopher! or that the religion of the Bible, that contains the moſt ſublime and God-like truths, and the moſt pure and perfect precepts of piety and morality, is the contrivance of artful and wicked men, or evil ſpirits! Theſe, brethren, are no eaſy things. There are many ſceptics and ſmatterers in infidelity, but few, very few are able to make thorough work of it, or commence ſtaunch unbelievers. The attempt itſelf is a deſperate ſhift. A man muſt have reduced himſelf to a very ſad caſe indeed, before he can have any temptation to ſet about it. He has by his wilful wickedneſs, ſet chriſtianity againſt him, before he can have any temptation to ſet himſelf againſt chriſtianity: and when he proclaims war againſt it, he finds it hard, yea, impoſſible to make good his cauſe. He may indeed put on the airs of defiance and triumph, and affect to laugh at his enemy, and at times may be half-perſuaded he has really got the victory. But ſuch men find the arms of their own reaſon often againſt them, and their own conſcience forms violent inſurrections in favour of religion, which they cannot entirely ſuppreſs; ſo that they are like their father, whatever they pretend, they believe and tremble too. Alas! that there ſhould be ſo many unhappy companions in this infernal cauſe, in our country and nation. They find it hard, even now, to kick againſt the goads: and O! how much harder will they find it in the iſſue! Their reſiſtance will prove ruinous to themſelves: but neither they nor the gates of hell ſhall prevail againſt the cauſe they oppoſe. Chriſtianity will live when they are dead and damned, according to its ſentence. It is a long-tried bulwark, that has withſtood all the aſſaults of earth and hell, for near

near 6000 years, and has ſtill proved impregnable. Infidels may hurt themſelves by oppoſing it; as an unruly, ſtupid ox, their proper emblem, may hurt himſelf, but not the goads, by kicking againſt them.

2. Is it not hard for men to profeſs themſelves believers, and aſſent to the truths of chriſtianity, and yet live as if they were infidels!

A profeſſed ſpeculative atheiſt, or infidel, is a monſter that we do not often meet with: but the more abſurd and unaccountable phenomenon of a practical atheiſt; one who is orthodox in principle, but an infidel in practice, we may find wherever we turn: and it would be ſtrange if none ſuch have mingled in this aſſembly to-day. To ſuch I would particularly addreſs myſelf.

If you believe chriſtianity, or even the religion of Nature, you believe that there is a God of infinite excellency; the Maker, Preſerver, Benefactor and Ruler of the world, and of you in particular; and conſequently, that you are under the ſtrongeſt and moſt endearing obligations to love him, and make it your great ſtudy and endeavour to obey his will in all inſtances. Now is it not ſtrange, that while you believe this, you are able to live as you do! How can you live ſo thoughtleſs of this great and glorious God, who bears ſuch auguſt and endearing relations to you? How can you withhold your love from him, and ungratefully refuſe obedience? Is not this a hard thing to you? Does it not coſt you ſome labour to reconcile your conſciences to it? If this be eaſy to you, what champions in wickedneſs are you! how mighty to do evil! This would not be eaſy to the mightieſt archangel: no, it is a dire atchievement he would tremble to think of. And if it be eaſy to you, it is, as I obſerved before, in the ſame ſenſe that it is eaſy to a dead body to rot. Your ſtrength to do evil is your real weakneſs, or, which is the ſame, the ſtrength of your diſeaſe.

Again,

Again, If you believe the chriſtian religion, you believe the glorious doctrine of redemption through Jeſus Chriſt; you believe that he, the Father's great co-equal Son, aſſumed our nature, paſſed through the various hardſhips of life, and died upon a croſs for you; and all this out of pure unmerited love. And is it no difficulty to neglect him, to diſhonour him, to ſlight his love, and diſobey his commands? Does this monſtrous wickedneſs never put you to a ſtand? Degenerate and corrupt as you are, have you not ſuch remains of generous principles within you, as that you cannot, without great violence to your own hearts, reject ſuch a Saviour? Does not at leaſt a ſpark of gratitude ſometimes kindle in your hearts, which you find it hard to quench entirely? Does not conſcience often take up arms in the cauſe of its Lord, and do you not find it hard to quell the inſurrection? Alas! if you find little or no difficulty in treating the bleſſed Jeſus with neglect, it ſhews that you are mighty giants in iniquity, and ſin with the ſtrength of a devil.

Again; If you believe the chriſtian religion, you muſt believe that regeneration, or a thorough change of heart and life, and univerſal holineſs, are eſſentially neceſſary to conſtitute you a real chriſtian, and prepare you for everlaſting happineſs. And while you have this conviction, is it not a hard thing for you to be only chriſtians in name, or ſelf-condemned hypocrites, or to reſt contented in any attainments ſhort of real religion? Is it an eaſy thing to you to keep your eyes always ſhut againſt the light, which would ſhew you to yourſelves in your true colours? to keep ſuch a cloſe guard, as never to let the mortifying ſecret paſs, that you are indeed but a hypocrite, and to harden yourſelves againſt the portion of hypocrites, which will ere long be diſtributed to you?

Finally, If you believe chriſtianity, or even natural religion, you believe a future ſtate of rewards and puniſhments; rewards and puniſhments the higheſt that human nature is capable of. And is it not a hard

thing

thing to make light of immortal happineſs, or everlaſting miſery? Since you love yourſelves, and have a ſtrong innate deſire of pleaſure and horror of pain, how can you reconcile yourſelves to the thoughts of giving up your portion in heaven, and being ingulphed for ever in the infernal pit? Or how can you ſupport your hope of enjoying the one, and eſcaping the other, while you have no ſufficient evidence? Can you venture ſo important an intereſt upon an uncertainty, or dare to take your chance, without caring what might be the iſſue? Are you capable of ſuch dreadful fool-hardineſs? Do you not often ſhrink back aghaſt from the proſpect? Does not the happineſs of heaven ſometimes ſo ſtrongly attract you, that you find it hard to reſiſt? And do not the terrors of hell ſtart up before you in the way of ſin, and are you not brought to a ſtand, and ready to turn back? The pit of hell, like a raging volcano, thunders at a diſtance, that you may not fall thereinto by ſurprize. You may perceive its flames, and ſmoke, and roarings in the threatenings of God's law, while you are yet at a diſtance from it. And is it eaſy for you to puſh on your way, when thus warned? O! one would think, it would be much more eaſy and delightful to a creature endowed with reaſon and ſelf-love, to abandon this dangerous road, and chooſe the ſafe and pleaſant way of life.

I might multiply inſtances under this head: but theſe muſt ſuffice at preſent. And I proceed to aſk,

3. Is it not hard for a man to live in a conſtant conflict with himſelf? I mean with his conſcience.

This obſtacle in the way to hell has appeared in all the former particulars: but it is ſo great, and ſeemingly inſuperable, that it deſerves to be pointed out by itſelf. When the ſinner would continue his career to hell, conſcience, like the cherubim at the gates of paradiſe, or the angel in Balaam's road, meets him with its flaming ſword, and turns every way, to guard the dreadful entrance into the chambers of death. When

When a man goes on in the thoughtleſs neglect of God, and the concerns of eternity, or indulges himſelf in vice and irreligion, conſcience whiſpers, "What will be the end of this courſe? thou ſhalt yet ſuffer for this. Is it fit thou ſhouldeſt thus treat the bleſſed God, and the Saviour Jeſus Chriſt? Is it wiſe to neglect the great work of ſalvation, and run the riſque of eternal ruin?" I may appeal to ſinners themſelves, whether they do not often hear ſuch remonſtrances as theſe from within? Indeed, in the hurry and buſtle of buſineſs and company, and the headlong career of pleaſure and amuſement, the voice of conſcience is not heard. But you cannot always avoid retirement: ſometimes you muſt be by yourſelves, and then you find it hard to cloſe up and guard all the avenues of ſerious thought. Then conſcience inſiſts upon a fair hearing, and enters many a ſolemn proteſtation againſt your conduct, warns you of the conſequence, and urges you to take another courſe. Whatever airs of impious bravery you put on in public, and however boldly you bid defiance to theſe things, yet, in ſuch penſive hours, do you not find that you are cowards at heart? Is not conſcience like to get the victory? Are you not obliged to break out into the world, and rally all its forces to your aſſiſtance, that you may ſuppreſs your conſcience? Now, how hard a life is this! The life of the ſinner is a warfare, as well as that of the chriſtian. Conſcience is his enemy, always diſturbing him; that is, he himſelf is an enemy to himſelf while he continues an enemy to God. Some, indeed, by repeated violences, ſtun their conſcience, and it ſeems to lie ſtill, like a conquered enemy. But this is a conqueſt fatal to the conquerors. O! would it not be much eaſier to let conſcience have fair play, to purſue your own happineſs, as it urges you, and leave the ſmooth, down-hill road to ruin, from which it would reſtrain you? Conſcience urges you to your duty and intereſt with many ſharp goads, and will you ſtill kick againſt them? O! do you not find this

hard? I am ſure it would be very hard, it would be impoſſible to a creature under the right conduct of reaſon and ſelf-love. And before you can be capable of performing this dire exploit with eaſe, you muſt have acquired a prodigious, gigantic ſtrength in ſinning. This is what the mightieſt ſaint upon earth could not dare to do. No; he owns conſcience is his maſter: long did he reſiſt, but now he muſt ſubmit; and he would not incur the diſpleaſure of his conſcience for all the world. O! that we were all weak in this reſpect! My time will allow me only to add,

4. Is it not a hard piece of ſelf-denial for you to deprive yourſelves of the exalted pleaſures of religion?

You love yourſelves, and you love happineſs, and therefore one would reaſonably expect you would chooſe that which will afford you the moſt ſolid, refined and laſting happineſs, and abandon whatever is inconſiſtent with it. Now religion is a ſource of happineſs. Yes; that dull, melancholy thing, religion, which you think, perhaps, would put an end to all your pleaſures, and which, for that reaſon, you have kept at a diſtance from; religion, which, its enemies will tell you, has made ſome intolerably preciſe, and dead to all the joys of life, and turned others mad and melancholy; religion, I ſay, will afford you a happineſs more pure, more noble, and more durable than all the world can give. Religion not only propoſes future happineſs, beyond the comprehenſion of thought, but will afford you preſent happineſs beyond whatever you have known while ſtrangers to it. The pleaſures of a peaceful, approving conſcience, of communion with God, the ſupreme good, of the moſt noble diſpoſitions and moſt delightful contemplations; theſe are the pleaſures of religion. And aſk thoſe who have enjoyed them, thoſe whom experience has qualified to be judges, and they will tell you with one voice, "There are no pleaſures comparable to theſe." Beſides, religion has infinitely the advantage of other things

things as to futurity. Thoſe pleaſures which are inconſiſtent with it end in ſhocking proſpects, as well as pale reviews. But religion opens the brighteſt proſpects; proſpects of everlaſting ſalvation and happineſs; proſpects that brighten the gloomy ſhades of death, and the awful world beyond, and run out infinitely beyond our ken through a vaſt eternal duration. My heart is ſo full of my ſubject, that I muſt borrow the more expreſſive words of another, to give it vent.*

" Let the proud Witling argue all he can,
" It is Religion ſtill that makes the man:
" 'Tis this, my friends, that ſtreaks our morning bright;
" 'Tis this that gilds the horrors of our night.
" When wealth forſakes us, and when friends are few;
" When friends are faithleſs, or when foes purſue;
" 'Tis this that wards the blow, or ſtills the ſmart;
" Diſarms affliction, or repels its dart;
" Within the breaſt bids pureſt pleaſures riſe;
" Bids ſmiling conſcience ſpread her cloudleſs ſkies.

" When the ſtorm thickens, and the thunder rolls;
" When the earth trembles to th' affrighted poles;
" The pious mind nor doubts nor fears aſſail,
" For ſtorms are zephyrs, or a gentler gale.

" And when diſeaſe obſtructs the labouring breath,
" When the heart ſickens, and each pulſe is death,
" Even then Religion ſhall ſuſtain the juſt,
" Grace their laſt moments, nor deſert their duſt."

Such, my brethren, is religion; the higheſt, the moſt ſubſtantial, and moſt laſting happineſs of man. And is it not a painful piece of ſelf-denial to you, to give up all this happineſs, when nothing is required to purchaſe it but only your choice of it! Is not this doing violence to the innate principle of ſelf-love and deſire of happineſs? Can you be ſo ſtupid, as to imagine that the world, or ſin, or any thing that can come in competition with religion, can be of equal or comparable advantage to you? Sure your own reaſon muſt give in its verdict in favour of religion. And is it not

* See a Letter to Mr. Hervey by a phyſician, prefixed to his Meditations. Vol. I.

not a hard thing for you to act againſt your own reaſon, againſt your own intereſt, your higheſt, your immortal intereſt, and againſt your own innate deſire of happineſs? Do you never find it any difficulty to live for years in the world, without once taſting the ſweets of the love of God, or the pleaſures of an applauding conſcience? Is it not hard, that while others around you, in the uſe of the very means which you enjoy, are made meet for the inheritance of the ſaints in light, and are animated to endure the calamities of life, and encounter the terrors of death, by the proſpect of everlaſting glory, while they are now often loſt in extatic wonder, while ſurveying the things that God hath laid up for them that love him; I ſay, is it not hard, that you ſhould be deſtitute of all theſe tranſporting proſpects, and have nothing but a fearful expectation of wrath and fiery indignation, or at beſt a vain, ſelf-flattering hope, which will iſſue in the more confounding diſappointment? Is not this really hard? Muſt it not be a difficulty to you to live at this rate?

And now, ſinners, will you with infernal bravery break through all theſe obſtacles, and force a paſſage into the flames below? Or will you not give over the prepoſterous ſtruggle to ruin yourſelves, and ſuffer yourſelves to be ſaved? O let me arreſt you in your dangerous career, as the voice which pronounced my text did St. Paul; and let me prevail upon you for the future to chooſe the highway to life, and take that courſe to which God, conſcience, duty, and intereſt urge you. In that indeed you will meet with difficulties; it is a narrow and rugged road; and it will require hard ſtriving to make a progreſs in it. But then the difficulties you have here to ſurmount are in the road to happineſs, with which therefore it is worth your while to ſtruggle: but thoſe in the other are in the road to deſtruction; and your ſtriving to ſurmount them, is but ſtriving to deſtroy yourſelves for ever. It may be worth your while to labour and conflict hard to be ſaved, but is it worth while to take ſo much

much pains, and ſtrive ſo hard to be damned? Beſides, the difficulties in the heavenly road reſult from the weak, diſordered, and wicked ſtate of human nature, as the difficulty of animal action and enjoyment proceeds from ſickneſs of body; and conſequently, every endeavour to ſurmount theſe difficulties tends to heal, to rectify, to ſtrengthen, and ennoble our nature, and advance it to perfection. But the difficulties in the way to hell proceed from the contrariety of that courſe to the beſt principles of human nature, and to the moſt ſtrong and rational obligations; and conſequently, the more we ſtruggle with theſe difficulties, the more we labour to ſuppreſs and root out the remains of all good principles, and break the moſt inviolable obligations to God and ourſelves. The eaſier it is for us to ſin, the more baſe and corrupt we are: juſt as the more rotten a limb is, the eaſier for it to drop off; the more diſordered and ſtupified the body is, the more eaſy to die. To meet with no obſtacle in the way to hell, but to run on without reſtraint, is terrible indeed; it ſhews a man abandoned of God, and ripe for deſtruction. Such an eaſe in ſinning is the quality of a devil.

Upon the whole, you ſee, that though there be difficulties on both ſides, yet the way to heaven has infinitely the advantage; and therefore, let me again urge you to chooſe it. You have walked long enough at variance with God, with your own conſcience, with your own intereſt, and duty: come now, be reconciled: make theſe your antagoniſts no longer. While you perſiſt in this oppoſition, you do but kick againſt the pricks; that is, you make a reſiſtance injurious to yourſelves. For the future, declare war againſt ſin, Satan, and all their confederates, and ere long ye ſhall be made more than conquerors; and for your encouragement remember, *He that overcometh ſhall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he ſhall be my ſon, ſaith the Lord God Almighty.*

SERMON

SERMON LII.

THE *CHARACTERS* OF THE *WHOLE* AND *SICK*, IN A *SPIRITUAL SENSE*, CONSIDERED AND CONTRASTED.

MATT. ix 12. *But when Jeſus heard that, he ſaid unto them, They that be whole need not a phyſician, but they that are ſick.*

THERE is no article of faith more certain than that Jeſus Chriſt is an all-ſufficient and moſt willing Saviour, *able to ſave to the uttermoſt all that come unto God through him*, and that *thoſe that come unto him, he will in nowiſe caſt out.* They that intruſt their ſouls in his hands he keeps, and none of them is loſt. It is alſo certain that all the guilty ſons of Adam ſtand in the moſt abſolute need of him: in vain do they look for ſalvation in any other. Without him, they are undone for ever: and without him, their very exiſtence becomes a curſe, and their immortality but the duration of their miſery. The diſeaſe of ſin has ſo deeply infected their ſouls, that none but this divine Phyſician can heal them.

Since this is the caſe, who would not expect that Jeſus would be univerſally the darling of mankind? Who would not expect that as many as are wounded, and juſt periſhing of their wounds, would all earneſtly apply to this Phyſician, and ſeek relief from him upon any terms? Who would ſuſpect there ſhould be ſo much as one heart cold and diſaffected towards him? Muſt not all love and deſire him, ſince all need him ſo extremely, and ſince he is ſo completely qualified to be their Deliverer?

But

But, alas! notwithſtanding ſuch favourable preſumptions from the nature of the thing, it is a moſt notorious fact that this divine Phyſician is but little regarded in our dying world. This all-ſufficient and willing Saviour is generally neglected by periſhing ſinners. There are thouſands among us that have no affectionate thoughts of him, no eager longings after him, they exert no vigorous endeavours to obtain an intereſt in him, nor are they tenderly ſolicitous about it. They indeed profeſs his religion, and call themſelves chriſtians after his name: they pay him the compliment of a bended knee, and now and then perform the external duties of religion, and thus have high hopes they ſhall be ſaved through him; but as to their hearts and affections, he has no ſhare there: theſe are reſerved for the world, which, in practical eſtimation, they prefer to him, whatever they profeſs.

Now whence is this ſtrange and ſhocking phenomenon in the rational world? Whence is it that the dying are careleſs about a Phyſician? that a Deliverer is neglected by thoſe that are periſhing? The true reaſon we may find in my text, *They that be whole need not a phyſician, but they that are ſick;* that is, "they who imagine themſelves well, however diſordered they are in reality, do not feel their need of a phyſician, and therefore will not apply to him; but they who feel themſelves ſick, will eagerly apply to him, and put themſelves under his care."

This is the anſwer of Chriſt to the proud cavilling Phariſees, who cenſured his free converſation with publicans and ſinners, at an entertainment which Matthew had prepared for him. The publicans were a ſort of cuſtom-houſe officers among the Jews, appointed by the Romans, whoſe tributaries they then were, to collect the levies or duties impoſed by the government. They were generally perſons of bad morals, and particularly given to rapine and extortion in raiſing the taxes. On this account they were particularly hated by the Jews, eſpecially by the ſtrict ſect of the

the Phariſees. Their very office would have rendered them odious, even though they had behaved well in it; for it was a public badge of the ſlavery of the Jews to the Romans; which, to a people ſo proud and ſo fond of liberty as the Jews, was a mortification they could not patiently bear. The publicans therefore were objects of general contempt and abhorrence, as an abandoned ſort of men; and the Jews, particularly the rigid and haughty Phariſees, held no converſation with them, but kept them at a diſtance, as tho' they had been excommunicated. Hence, ſays Chriſt, concerning one excommunicated by the church for incorrigible wickedneſs, *Let him be to thee as an heathen man, and a publican*, Matt. xviii. 17. that is, have no intercourſe with him, but treat him as the Jews do the publicans.

The condeſcending Jeſus, who *came to ſeek and ſave that which was loſt*, did not conduct himſelf towards thoſe poor outcaſts, upon the rigid principles of the Phariſees. They held them in ſuch contempt, that they did not labour to inſtruct and reform them.—But Jeſus preached to them, converſed with them freely, uſed the moſt condeſcending, affable, and ingratiating meaſures to reform them, and called ſome of them to the honour of being his diſciples: of this number was Matthew, the author of this hiſtory; once an abandoned publican, afterwards a diſciple, an apoſtle, and one of the four evangeliſts, whoſe immortal writings have diffuſed the vital ſavour of the name of Jeſus through all ages and countries. O! the condeſcenſion, the freeneſs, the efficacy of the grace of Chriſt! it can make a publican an apoſtle! an abhorred outcaſt the favourite of heaven, and the companion of angels! What abundant encouragement does this give to the moſt abandoned ſinner among you to turn unto the Lord! Let publicans and ſinners deſpair of mercy and ſalvation if they continue in their preſent condition; but if they ariſe and follow Jeſus at his call, and become his humble, teachable diſciples, they

they need not deſpair; nay, they may rejoice in hope of the glory of God, and be aſſured they ſhall be admitted into the kingdom of God, when the ſelf-righteous children of the kingdom are ſhut out.

When Matthew had embraced the call, he made a feaſt for his new Maſter, that he might ſhew his reſpect and gratitude to him, and that he might let his brother publicans and old companions have an opportunity of converſing with him, and receive his inſtructions. How natural is it for a ſinner juſt brought to love Jeſus, to uſe means to allure others to him, eſpecially his former companions! Having ſeen his own guilt and danger, he is deeply affected with theirs, and would willingly lead them to that Saviour who has given him ſo gracious a reception. Indeed his generous endeavours of this kind, though the moſt ſubſtantial and diſintereſted evidences of friendſhip, often excite the contempt and ridicule of his former companions; and the more ſo, as they are generally attended with the imprudent, but well-meant blunders of inexperience, and an honeſt zeal mingled with wild-fire. But at times ſuch a convert is made the inſtrument of bringing thoſe to be his companions in the way to heaven, who had walked with him in the ways of ſin: and this is ſufficient encouragement to ſuch of you as have been called, like Matthew, to uſe your beſt endeavours with your fellow-ſinners. Who knows but you may *ſave a ſoul from death, and hide a multitude of ſins?* And what a noble, beneficent exploit is this!

The bleſſed Jeſus, who was always ready to embrace every opportunity of doing good, whatever popular odium it might expoſe him to, cheerfully complies with Matthew's invitation, and mingles with a crowd of publicans at his table. Like a phyſician, he employs himſelf in an hoſpital, among the ſick and dying, and not among the healthy and gay. The converſation of ſinners could not be agreeable to him for itſelf; but as it gave him opportunity of doing them

good, it afforded him a generous pleaſure. To converſe with his Father and the holy angels in his native heaven, would have been more pleaſing in itſelf to his holy ſoul; but if by converſing with ſinners in our guilty world, he can but ſave the periſhing creatures, he cheerfully ſubmits to the ſelf-denial, and even rejoices in it; juſt as a compaſſionate phyſician, though he has no pleaſure in the melancholy manſions of ſickneſs, yet frequents them, that he may relieve the diſtreſſed.

The Phariſees now thought they had a good handle to raiſe popular clamour againſt Chriſt, and therefore cavil at theſe freedoms, as though they had been profane, and inconſiſtent with the character of the Meſſiah, or even of a prophet. If he claimed this character, they thought it much more becoming him to keep company with them, than with profligate publicans. Hence, to ſtumble and perplex his diſciples, they come to them, and aſk, *Why eateth your Maſter with publicans and ſinners?* The diſciples were not as yet endowed with that mouth and wiſdom which all their enemies could not withſtand; and therefore Jeſus anſwers them, and takes upon himſelf his own defence. *The whole*, ſays he, *have no need of a phyſician, but they that are ſick.* Some ſuppoſe, that by the whole, Chriſt means thoſe that were really whole, or that were not ſo infected with the diſeaſe of ſin, as to ſtand in need of him as a phyſician. When ſuch perſons can be found among the ſons of men, this expoſition will appear more plauſible. But ſince we know that all have ſinned, and ſtand in need of Chriſt as a Saviour, it is much more reaſonable, I think, to ſuppoſe, that by the whole, Chriſt means thoſe that imagined themſelves whole, though really languiſhing with the deadly diſeaſe of ſin. It ſeems to me that he here anſwers the Phariſees upon their own principles, and proves his conduct to be juſtifiable, even ſuppoſing their high opinion of themſelves, and their contemptuous idea of the publicans, to be true; as if he had ſaid,

ſaid, "I come into the world under the character of a phyſician for ſick ſouls. Such, you will grant, theſe deſpiſed publicans are; and therefore, you muſt alſo grant, that theſe are the perſons I have to deal with, and theſe are moſt likely to make application to me. But as for yourſelves, you think you are righteous; you think you are not ſo far gone with the diſeaſe of ſin as to need a phyſician ſent down from heaven to heal you. Now I will not determine at preſent, whether this high opinion you have of yourſelves be juſt or not. Be it right or wrong, it is certain, that while you entertain it, you cannot conſiſtently find fault with my conduct. If you are ſuch, I have no buſineſs with you as a phyſician. I muſt, therefore, rather chooſe to converſe with theſe ſinners, who now begin to ſee themſelves ſuch, and to be ſenſible of their need of a phyſician."

Thus, as I obſerved, Jeſus here forms an argument *ad hominem*, or vindicates his conduct even upon the principles of the Phariſees themſelves. It was not now to his purpoſe to diſpute the high opinion they had of themſelves; even that opinion furniſhed him with a ſufficient defence. But, when it was proper, he faithfully expoſes their true character, as proud, ſelf-righteous hypocrites, and denounces the moſt terrible woes againſt them.

I might perhaps render the matter plainer by a familiar illuſtration. Suppoſe a man of learning in company with two perſons; the one really ignorant, but highly conceited of his knowledge, and conſequently unteachable; the other ignorant too, but ſenſible of it, and, therefore, deſirous of inſtruction: ſuppoſe he ſhould turn from the ſelf-conceited creature, and carry on converſation with the other, who was likely to profit by it; and ſuppoſe the former ſhould reſent it, and ſay, "If he were indeed a ſcholar, as he pretends to be, he would not be fond of the ſociety of ſuch an ignorant dunce, but would rather chooſe me for a companion." How properly might a teacher reply,

"O!

" O! you are a wiſe man; and have no need of my inſtruction; and, therefore, as a teacher, I have no buſineſs with you; but this poor, ignorant creature is ſenſible of his want of inſtruction; and, therefore, it is moſt fit I ſhould converſe with him." Such a reply has a peculiar pungency and mortifying force in it: and ſuch Jeſus uſed in the caſe before us.

To give a fuller view of this text, and to adapt it to practical purpoſes, I intend to deſcribe the characters of thoſe that are whole, and of thoſe that are ſick, in the ſenſes here intended.

There are none of the ſons of men who are really whole. Their ſouls are all diſeaſed; for all have ſinned, and *there is none righteous, no not one.* And perhaps there are none upon earth ſo proud, and ſo ignorant of themſelves, as to affirm in ſo many words, that they are whole; that is, " perfectly righteous."— Therefore by the whole, cannot be meant either thoſe who are really free from all ſin, or thoſe who imagine themſelves entirely free from it. It does not appear that even the proud Phariſees were capable of flattering themſelves ſo far. But by the whole, are meant thoſe who are indeed guilty, depraved ſinners, and who are ready to make a ſuperficial confeſſion in words that they are ſinners, but continue ſecure and impenitent, inſenſible of their guilt, their corruption, their danger, and their need of a Saviour; that is, thoſe who are really ſick, and dangerouſly ill, and yet are as eaſy, as unapprehenſive of danger, as careleſs about applying to the phyſician, as if nothing ailed them. The diſeaſe is of a lethargic nature, and ſtupifies the unhappy creatures, ſo that they are not ſenſible of it. It renders them delirious, ſo that they think themſelves well, when the ſymptoms of death are ſtrong upon them. What multitudes of ſuch may we ſee in the world! The word of God pronounces them dangerouſly ill; their friends may ſee the moſt deadly ſymptoms upon them: but, alas! they are ſtupidly inſenſible of their own caſe. Jeſus, the divine Phyſician, warns

warns them of their danger, offers them his help, and preſcribes to them the infallible means of recovery; but they diſregard his warnings, neglect his gracious offer, and refuſe to ſubmit to his preſcriptions. This is the general character of thoſe that are whole, in the ſenſe of my text.

By the ſick, are meant thoſe who, like the former, are really guilty, corrupt ſinners, in extreme need of a Saviour, and who readily confeſs they are ſuch; but here lies the difference, they are not only ſuch in reality, and they not only acknowledge that they are ſuch, but they are deeply ſenſible of it, they are tenderly affected with their caſe: their temper and conduct, their thoughts of themſelves and of Jeſus Chriſt, their deſigns and endeavours are ſuch as are natural to a ſoul ſenſibly ſick of ſin, and ſuch as bear a reſemblance to thoſe of a perſon ſick in body, and uſing all means for a recovery. It is the characteriſtic of this claſs of ſinners, not that they are leſs holy, or in more danger, than others; but that they are more ſenſible of their condition, and more ſolicitous and laborious about deliverance. They feel themſelves diſordered; they put themſelves under the care of Jeſus, the only Phyſician of ſouls; they ſubmit to his preſcriptions, and uſe all means for their recovery to ſoundneſs of mind, from the deadly diſeaſe of ſin. This is the general character of the ſick, in the ſenſe of my text; but it is neceſſary I ſhould deſcend to particulars.

The particular characters of the whole and the ſick, in contraſt, are ſuch as theſe:

1. He that is whole has never had a clear affecting ſight and ſenſe of ſin; but he that is ſick is fully convicted, and deeply ſenſible of it. The one has only a general, ſuperficial, unaffecting conviction that he is a ſinner; that he has not been ſo good as he ſhould have been; that his heart is ſomewhat diſordered; and eſpecially that he has been guilty of ſundry bad actions. But alas! he neither ſees his ſinfulneſs in its full extent, nor is ſuitably affected with that little of it

it he ſees. He does not clearly ſee the entire and univerſal corruption of his heart, and the numberleſs principles and ſeeds of ſin that are there; the blindneſs of his mind as to divine things; the ſecret diſaffection of his heart towards God and holineſs; the carnality of his mind, and his lukewarmneſs and formality in the duties of religion. He may have a tranſient glance, a ſuperficial view of theſe things; but he has not a deep ſettled conviction of them; nor is he ſuitably affected with what he knows of his own ſinfulneſs. It does not appear to him ſuch a mighty matter to have ſuch a diſordered heart towards God, to have dropped a forbidden word now and then, or to have committed a few bad actions; few, I ſay, for ſo they appear to him, though repeated times and ways beyond number. Sin appears to him a trifling peccadillo, a ſmall evil, and he has a thouſand excuſes to make for it. Hence he is as eaſy as careleſs, as preſumptuous in his hopes as if he believed he did not really deſerve puniſhment from a righteous God, and therefore was in no danger. Though the leproſy of ſin ſpreads ever ſo wide, and breaks out into ever ſo many putrid and mortifying ſores, yet he is eaſy and ſecure, and inſenſible of the diſeaſe. Thus, like a man in health, he is unconcerned, and neither apprehends himſelf ſick, nor uſes the leaſt means for his recovery.

O! what multitudes of ſuch are among us! They will confeſs themſelves ſinners, with as little concern as if they were quite free from ſin, or as if they thought there was little or no danger in it.

But is it ſo with the poor ſick ſinner? O! no: he ſees, he feels that his *whole head is ſick, and his whole heart faint and that from the crown of the head even unto the ſoul of the foot, there are nothing but wounds, bruiſes, and putrifying ſores.* He feels the plague of a hard ſenſeleſs heart, and the ſecret ſprings of wickedneſs within him. He feels that ſin has enfeebled all his powers, and that he is no more able to exert them in religious endeavours, than a ſick man is to employ himſelf

himſelf in active life. O! into what a conſternation is the ſinner ſtruck, when he is awakened out of his lethargic ſecurity, and his eyes are opened to ſee himſelf in a juſt light! He had flattered himſelf that he had a good conſtitution of ſoul, and that little or nothing ailed him; but now, he is ſurpriſed to ſee the ſtrong ſymptoms of ſpiritual death upon him.

Suppoſe ſome of you, who have come here to-day vigorous and healthy, ſhould ſuddenly diſcover the ſpots of a plague broken out all over you, how would it ſtrike you with ſurprize and horror! Such is the ſurprize and horror of the awakened ſinner; thus is he alarmed and amazed. So clear are his views of his entire and univerſal depravity and imminent danger, that he is utterly aſtoniſhed he was ſo ſtupid as never to diſcover it before. Now alſo he has a deep ſenſe of the evil of ſin: he not only ſees himſelf univerſally diſordered, but he ſees, he feels the diſorder to be deadly: ſin now appears to him the greateſt evil upon earth, or even in hell. O! how worthy of the ſevereſt vengeance from a righteous God! how contrary to the divine purity! how baſe, how ungrateful a violation of the moſt ſtrong and endearing obligations! how deſtructive to the ſoul, not only according to the penalty of the divine law, but in its own native tendency! During the progreſs of the Chriſtian life he feels himſelf recovering a little, though very ſlowly, while he follows the preſcriptions of his divine phyſician, and receives healing influences from him. He feels his enfeebled ſoul gathering a little ſtrength; his vitiated taſte gradually corrected; and the welcome ſymptoms of returning health; but O! he is ſenſibly ſick ſtill. The cure is not complete in this world; but the remains of his old diſorder hang upon him all his life, and he is ſubject to many dangerous relapſes, in which it gathers new ſtrength, and he is afraid it is incurable.

2. They that are whole are generally eaſy and ſecure, and unapprehenſive of danger: but the ſick ſoul is

is alarmed and anxious; and cannot be eaſy, till it perceives ſome appearances of recovery.

He that is whole is benumbed with a ſtupid inſenſibility; but he that is ſick is in pain from the diſeaſe of ſin, which he ſenſibly feels. The one can walk about, merry and thoughtleſs, with a hard depraved heart within him; the other is perpetually uneaſy, and, like a ſick man, has no taſte for any thing while he feels ſuch a heart within him. If the one is anxious, it is with ſome worldly care; if the other is anxious, it is chiefly for the recovery of his dying ſoul. The one can give himſelf up to buſineſs, or pleaſure, or idleneſs, as a man in health, and at eaſe; the other is apprehenſive that his ſoul is in great danger; and, like a ſick man, gives up to his eager purſuits, till he ſees whether he is likely to recover. He is alarmed with the deadly conſequences of ſin, as it expoſes him to the wrath of God, the loſs of heaven, and all the miſeries of the infernal world. But this is not all that diſtreſſes him; he conſiders ſin in itſelf as a loathſome diſeaſe, and is pained with its preſent effects upon him. As a ſick man is not only alarmed at the conſequence of his diſeaſe, namely, death, but conſiders it as a preſent pain, and as depriving him of the preſent comforts of life, ſo the ſick ſoul feels ſin as a loathſome, painful diſeaſe, that now deprives it of the exalted pleaſures of religion, and renders it incapable of ſerving its God with vigour and life. This indiſpoſition of ſoul for the exerciſes of religion, is, in itſelf, a conſtant uneaſineſs to him who is ſpiritually ſick. How ſtrongly does St. Paul repreſent the caſe, when he cries out, *O! wretched man that I am! who ſhall deliver me from the body of this death?* Rom. vii. 24. The image ſeems to be that of a living man walking about with a rotten, nauſeous carcaſe tied faſt to him, which oppreſſes him, and he cannot, with all his efforts, caſt it off; but it lies heavy upon him wherever he goes, which conſtrains him to cry out, "O! who ſhall deliver me from this dead body?" This is the character of

of the ſoul ſick of ſin. But he that is whole hath little or no uneaſineſs upon this account. If he is alarmed at all, it is with the conſequence of ſin; his ſlaviſh ſoul fears nothing but the puniſhment. As for the diſeaſe itſelf, it is ſo far from giving him uneaſineſs, that he is in love with it. It affords him ſenſations of pleaſure, rather than of pain, and he rather dreads a recovery than the continuance of the diſorder. Sin has intoxicated him to ſuch a degree, that holineſs, which is the health of the ſoul, is diſagreeable to him, and he would rather continue languiſhing than recover.

My brethren, you can eaſily diſtinguiſh between ſickneſs and health of body; and you are very ready to do it. And will you not inquire what ſtate your ſouls are in? whether they are ſenſible of their ſickneſs, and in a way of recovery? or whether they are ſtupified, or made delirious by the diſorder, inſenſible of their danger, and unſolicitous about their recovery? I pray you examine yourſelves in theſe particulars.

3. They that are whole are unwilling to apply to a phyſician, or to follow his preſcriptions; but to the ſick a phyſician is moſt welcome, and they will ſubmit to his directions, however ſelf-denying and mortifying. This is the point my text has particularly in view, and therefore we muſt take particular notice of it.

They that are in health have no regard to a phyſician, as ſuch: they neither ſend for him, nor will they accept of his help, if offered gratis: they look upon the beſt of medicines with neglect, as of no uſe or importance to them: the preſcriptions proper to the ſick they hear with indifference, as not being concerned. Thus it is with thouſands, who imagine themſelves whole in ſpirit. The Lord Jeſus exhibits himſelf to the ſons of men under the character of a phyſician; the goſpel makes a free offer of his aſſiſtance to all ſick ſouls that will freely accept it. And what reception does he generally meet with? Why, multitudes

neglect him, as though they had no need of him. They may indeed pay him the compliment of profeſſing his religion, becauſe it happened to be the religion of their fathers and their country, but they have no eager deſires after him; they are not in earneſt, and laborious to obtain his aſſiſtance; they do not invite him with the moſt affectionate intreaties to undertake their caſe; they do not beg and cry for relief from him, like blind Bartimeus, Mark x. 47. *Jeſus, thou Son of David, have mercy on us.* In ſhort, whatever regard they may profeſs for him, they are not deeply ſenſible of their abſolute need of him: they are not feelingly affected towards him, as towards a being with whom they have the neareſt perſonal concern, a concern of the utmoſt importance: and the reaſon is, they are whole in their own apprehenſions; or if they feel ſome qualms of conſcience, ſome fits of painful remorſe, they ſoon heal their own hurt ſlightly, *crying, Peace, peace, when there is no peace.* They make a medicine of their own prayers, tears, repentance, and religious endeavours, and with this they hope to heal themſelves. Thus Jeſus is neglected; they give him the name of a Saviour; but in reality they look to themſelves for a cure. How is the goſpel, that makes the offer of relief from this heavenly phyſician, generally received in the world? Alas! it is neglected, as the offer of ſuperfluous help. It is heard with that indifference with which men in health attend to the preſcriptions of a phyſician to the ſick, in which they have no immediate concern. Brethren, is this neglected goſpel the only effectual mean for healing your dying ſouls? Then what means the ſtupidity and inattention with which it is heard? What means the general neglect with which it is treated? O! how affecting is it to ſee a dying world rejecting the only reſtorative that can heal their diſeaſe, and preſerve their lives! But alas! thus it is all around us.

Again, Jeſus preſcribes to the ſons of men the only means of their recovery. Particularly he enjoins them no more to drink poiſon; that is, no more to indulge themſelves

themſelves in ſin, which is, in its own nature, the moſt deadly poiſon to the ſoul. And what can be more reaſonable than this? Yet this is what a ſtupid world principally objects againſt, and multitudes rather die than ſubmit to it. A diſordered, empoiſoned conſtitution of ſoul is to them the moſt agreeable. This divine Phyſician likewiſe requires them to uſe the means of grace inſtituted in the goſpel; to meditate upon their condition, and obtain a deep ſenſe of their diſorder; to read and hear the word with ſolemn attention, and ſelf-application; to pray with frequency and importunity. Theſe are his preſcriptions to all that would recover under his hands. But how few obſerve them in earneſt! What a general neglect of the means of grace prevails in our country, or what a careleſs attendance upon them! which is equally pernicious. Chriſt alſo enjoins them to ſubmit to him as their Phyſician, to flatter themſelves no longer that they can heal themſelves by means within their own power, but to apply his blood as the only healing balm to their wounded ſouls. But, alas! they diſregard this grand preſcription; they will not ſubmit to him; but, like an obſtinate patient, will have their own way, though eternal death ſhould be the conſequence.

But this is not the caſe of the ſinner ſpiritually ſick: he will do any thing, he will ſubmit to any thing, if it may but ſave him from the mortal diſeaſe of ſin. How ardently does he long after Jeſus! With what cheerfulneſs does he put himſelf under his care! With what joy and gratitude does he hear the offer of free ſalvation in the goſpel! and how dear is the goſpel to his heart on this account! With what eager wiſhful eyes does he look upon his Phyſician! How does he delight to feel himſelf under the operation of his hand! to feel him probe his wounds, and then apply the balm of his blood! With what anxiety does he obſerve the ſymptoms, and inquire whether he is upon the recovery or not! and O! with what pleaſure does he diſcover the ſigns of returning health! to feel a little

little eager appetite for ſpiritual food! to feel a little ſpiritual life in religious exerciſes! to feel himſelf able to run in the way of God's commandment! to feel the principles of ſin weakened within him! How ſweet is this! How willingly does he ſubmit to the preſcriptions of his phyſician, and attend upon the means of grace, however diſagreeable to a carnal mind! He makes the law of God the rule of his regimen, and would not indulge himſelf in any thing which that ſacred diſpenſatory forbids. He guards againſt relapſes, and keeps out of the way of temptation, as far as poſſible, leſt his frail conſtitution ſhould be hurt. The ſociety of ſinners is like the company of perſons infected with a contagious diſeaſe, which he is in danger of catching, and therefore he avoids it as cautiouſly as he can. Let thoſe that think their ſouls healthy and vigorous, boaſt of their ſtrength, and what mighty things they can do in religion; as for him, he feels his weakneſs; he feels he can do nothing aright, but juſt as he receives daily ſtrength from Chriſt. He feels himſelf every day troubled with ſome diſorder or other, yea with a complication of them: therefore he is daily ſenſible of his need of the phyſician, and makes daily application to him. He does not begrudge to take time from his other affairs, and, as it were, to keep his chamber a while, that he may uſe means for the recovery of his ſoul: for, O! if he loſe his ſoul, what would the whole world profit him! In ſhort, the ſick ſinner is a tender, delicate, frail creature, entirely ſubject to the preſcriptions of Chriſt, and every day taking means from him; anxious for his recovery, and willing to ſubmit to any thing that may promote it. This is the man, in our Chriſt-deſpiſing world, that gives Jeſus a moſt willing and welcome reception, and embraces his goſpel as containing all his ſalvation and all his deſire. O! that there were many ſuch in our world! for this man is in a hopeful way of recovery. This world is a vaſt hoſpital, full of dying ſouls: Jeſus deſcends from heaven and enters among them, offering

ing them health, and eternal life if they will but ſubmit to his directions, which are as eaſy as poſſible. Repentance indeed, and ſome other bitter ingredients, are included in a religion for ſinners; and how can it be otherwiſe, ſince theſe are neceſſary for their recovery in the very nature of things? Beſides, even theſe are ſweet, when taken in the vehicle of a Saviour's dying love; and many a ſoul has found more noble pleaſure in generous ſorrow for ſin than ever they found in the commiſſion of it.

But after all, the generality die in their ſins, amidſt the full means of their recovery; and the great reaſon is, they will not be convinced of their danger, nor be perſuaded to apply to the Phyſician. O! how tragical and affecting a caſe is this! and what may render it the more ſo to us, that it is the caſe of ſome of us. Yes, my brethren, though I am unwilling to harbour one hard thought of any of you, yet I cannot avoid concluding that there are ſome, I am afraid many ſouls, in this aſſembly, who are not ſenſible of their dangerous diſeaſe, and their need of Chriſt as a Phyſician, and therefore are in danger of periſhing without him. Sin, like a ſtrong doſe of opium, has ſtupified you, and you feel eaſy and whole-hearted, as if nothing ailed you, when the ſymptoms of death are ſtrong upon you. We can weep and lament over the ſick-bed of a dying friend, and we even drop our tears after him into the grave: but ſhall we drop no tears this day over dying ſouls, that are ſo numerous among us? What renders the caſe the more affecting is, that they periſh by their own wilful obſtinacy, under the hands of an all healing Phyſician:—*O that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night over the ſlain of the daughters of my people!* Ye ſecure and whole-hearted ſinners, muſt it not ſhock you to think that Jeſus Chriſt, the only Phyſician, gives you up? You ſee, in my text, he looks upon you as perſons that he has no buſineſs with. He had rather converſe with publicans and ſinners than

than with you, as having more hopes of ſucceſs among them. Let publicans and ſinners take the hint, and be encouraged to apply to Jeſus. Come, ye profligates and libertines, drunkards, ſwearers, whoremongers, come ſinners of the moſt abandoned characters, apply to this Phyſician. He is willing to heal you: He offers you healing. *Wilt thou be made whole?* is his queſtion to you this day. He is alſo perfectly able, able to ſave to the uttermoſt, however inveterate your diſeaſe may be. If the children of the kingdom ſhut themſelves out; if ſelf-righteous Phariſees reject this Phyſician, and die in their ſin, do you come in; put yourſelves under his care, ſubmit to his preſcriptions, and you ſhall yet live, and be reſtored to perfect health and eternal life. Rugged as you are, you are very proper materials for the temple of God. If you are ſenſibly ſick, it ſhould not diſcourage you from entering yourſelves into Chriſt's hoſpital, and putting yourſelves under his care; nay, this ſhould even encourage you. Your being ſick of ſin is a neceſſary qualification to render you his patients: they are ſuch he loves to converſe with, and they are only ſuch who are recovered by him. Therefore this day give yourſelves up to him as his willing patients. Cry to him to undertake your caſe: *Heal me, O Lord, and I ſhall be healed.* Submit to his preſcriptions, and follow his directions, and you ſhall live for ever.

I ſhall conclude my ſubject, by giving anſwers from it to ſome queſtions that may ariſe in your minds on this occaſion.

What is the reaſon that the world lies in ſuch a dead ſecurity around us? Whence is it there is ſo much ſin in the world, and ſo little fear of puniſhment? Whence is it that men will entertain ſuch hopes of heaven upon ſuch ſlight evidences, or rather with the full evidence of the word of God againſt them? Alas! the reaſon is, they are whole in their own imagination: they think themſelves well, and therefore apprehend no danger, but lie in a dead, inactive ſleep.

What

What is the reaſon why ſo many neglect the means of grace in public and private? Whence is it that there are ſo many prayerleſs families and prayerleſs cloſets among us? Why is the bible thrown by in ſome families, as a piece of uſeleſs lumber? Why is the houſe of God ſo thinly frequented in many places, and the table of the Lord almoſt deſerted? Why is chriſtian converſation ſo unfaſhionable? and why do we hear ſo few inquiries from ſinners, what they ſhall do to be ſaved? The reaſon is, they imagine themſelves well; they are whole-hearted; and, therefore, it is no wonder they neglect the means of recovery: they think they have no more to do with them than perſons in health with phyſic. The only method to bring to uſe thoſe means in earneſt, is to make them ſenſible of their dangerous diſeaſe. And O! that their miniſters may uſe all proper means with them for this end, and that divine grace may render them effectual!

What is the reaſon that the means of grace are attended upon by others with ſo much formality and indifference? Whence is it that there are ſo many lukewarm, ſpiritleſs prayers and ſolemn mockeries of the great God? ſo many wandering eyes and wandering hearts in the heavenly exerciſe of praiſe, and in hearing the moſt ſolemn and affecting truths? Whence is it that all the religion of many is nothing but a dull round of inſipid, lifeleſs formalities? Alas! the ſame reaſon returns: they are whole in their own conceit. And how can they, while they flatter themſelves with this imagination, uſe thoſe means in earneſt, which are intended for the recovery of the ſick? The ſick will uſe them in earneſt; but to others they are mere cuſtomary formalities.

Would you know what is the reaſon that the bleſſed Jeſus, the moſt glorious and benevolent perſon that ever appeared in our world, is ſo generally neglected? O! why is his love forgotten by thoſe very creatures for whom he ſhed his blood? Why are there not more longings and cries for him? Why is not a Saviour,

Saviour, an almighty and complete Saviour, more ſought after by periſhing ſinners? Why is his name of ſo little importance among them? How comes it to paſs, that he may continue for months, for years, for ſcores of years, offering ſalvation to them, intreating, commanding and perſuading them to accept it, and warning them of the dreadful ruin they will bring on themſelves by rejecting it? Whence is it that, after all, he is deſpiſed and rejected of men, and that but very few will give him ſuitable entertainment?— Whence is this ſhocking conduct in reaſonable creatures? O! it is the ſame old reaſon ſtill; they are whole-hearted, and do not feel themſelves dangerouſly ill; and how then can they be ſolicitous, about a phyſician!

What is the reaſon that the goſpel, which reveals and offers life and ſalvation to the world, meets with ſo cold a reception? Why does not the way of ſalvation therein diſcovered ſpread tranſport and praiſe over all the earth? Why does not the ſong of angels ſound from every human tongue, *Glory to God in the higheſt for peace proclaimed on earth, and good-will towards men?* Why does the chriſtian world in general practically deſpiſe that religion which they profeſs? O! it is becauſe they are whole in their own imaginations, though dying by thouſands all over the world. It is becauſe they are not ſenſible of their need of the goſpel and its bleſſings. O! if they were but once ſenſible how dangerouſly ill they are, they would ſoon change their opinion.

Let me bring this matter ſtill nearer home. Whence is it that the goſpel, even with all the diſadvantages that attend it from my unſkilful lips, does not meet with a more affectionate welcome among you? There are many, I am afraid, who ſtatedly or occaſionally attend here to hear the goſpel, who yet deſpiſe it in their hearts, or do not affectionately embrace it. And what is the reaſon of this? May I not venture to affirm, that the goſpel has been dear to ſome, who have

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ſat under no better miniſtry? Muſt not this then be the reaſon? That there are multitudes of whole-hearted ſinners, even among us, that mingle among us in the ſame aſſembly, and hear the goſpel from the ſame lips! Multitudes who are inſenſible of their diſeaſe, and conſequently of their need of a phyſician! O! inquire, whether this be not the true reaſon why the goſpel meets with ſuch a cold reception among us.

Would you know why ſo many fools make a mock of ſin! Why they can go on impenitent in it, apprehending little or no danger from it! Why they are every day ſinning, and every day merry, thoughtleſs and gay! Why they can love and delight in ſin, which God hates, and which he has threatened with ſuch heavy vengeance! Alas! the reaſon is, they are whole: they do not look upon ſin as a deadly diſeaſe that requires a cure, but as their health, which ought to be cheriſhed. This is the diſeaſe under which our body politic now languiſhes. It is this diſeaſe that enfeebles our counſels and undertakings; but who ſuſpects that this has any bad influence in the caſe? Who endeavours the cure of this, as the moſt effectual cure for a languiſhing, bleeding country!

What is the reaſon that men are cautious of coming near a houſe infected with a contagious ſickneſs, and that duty itſelf can hardly conſtrain them to enter, but that they can venture their ſouls without cauſe into inſnaring company, and within the ſphere of temptation? Whence is it, that, for the recovery of their mortal bodies, they will ſubmit to the moſt ſelf-denying regimen, take the moſt nauſeous draughts, and be at great pains and expence, whilſt, for their ſouls, they will take no pains, uſe no means, deny themſelves in no gratification? What is the reaſon of this? O! it is the ſame reaſon ſtill; they do not feel the leaſt ſickneſs of their ſouls, but imagine they have a firm, invulnerable conſtitution, incapable of infection in the moſt contagious places, and that it will recover by its native ſtrength, without any extrinſic help.

Would you know why there is ſo much ſpiritual pride and vanity in the world? why ſo many religious *Thraſos*, vain boaſters, who imagine they can turn to God when they pleaſe, in their own ſtrength, and who pretend they can perform ſuch great things in religion, when they are diſpoſed to make the attempt? O! it is becauſe they do not know they are ſick: they do not feel themſelves enfeebled by ſin, and diſabled from doing any thing truly good. You have ſeen ſome in a delirium, who imagined they were well, able to go about, and perform their uſual buſineſs, when in the mean time they were under the power of a deadly diſeaſe, and the ſymptoms of death perhaps then upon them. Juſt ſo it is with theſe oſtentatious boaſters; and could you but cure their delirium, and make them ſenſible of their diſorders, they would ſoon feel and confeſs themſelves poor, weak, languiſhing creatures, unable to do any thing, but juſt as they receive ſtrength from on high.

Would you know why ſo many hate faithful preaching, and reſent it if any means are uſed for their recovery? It is becauſe they imagine themſelves well; and ſuch do not like to be teaſed with the importunities of a phyſician, nor to have diſagreeable medicines forced upon them. O! were they but ſenſible of their condition, they would willingly ſubmit to the preſcriptions.

Would you know where you ſhould begin your religion; or what is the grand preparative for your embracing the goſpel in ſuch a manner as to be ſaved by it? To this intereſting inquiry you may eaſily infer and anſwer from what has been ſaid. Begin your religion in a deep ſenſe of ſin; let your wound be probed to the quick, in order to a thorough cure, otherwiſe it would be but ſlightly ſkinned over, and it will again break out, and prove more dangerous than ever: labour to get a deep ſenſe of your diſeaſe, and then you will ſo give yourſelves up to the Phyſician, that he may apply to you what he thinks proper, and make an effectual cure.

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Some of you perhaps have wondered why you ſee poor mourning creatures here and there, that cannot live as you do, thoughtleſs, careleſs, and unaffected. You aſcribe it perhaps to melancholy, to preciſeneſs, to hypocriſy, or an affectation of ſingularity. But I will tell you the true reaſon, They are ſick; they feel themſelves ſick; whereas you imagine yourſelves well; and you cannot wonder that the ſick and the healthy ſhould behave in a different manner. Why do they not neglect Jeſus Chriſt, as you do? O! it is becauſe they are ſick, heart-ſick, and therefore muſt long and cry for a phyſician. Why do they not indulge themſelves in ſin, as you do? It is becauſe they are ſick of it; they ſee it to be a mortal poiſon, and they cannot be eaſy while they feel it working through their frame. Why do they uſe the means with ſo much earneſtneſs? Why do they pray, and hear, and attend upon every religious ordinance with ſo much zeal and ſolicitude? Why can they not, like you, attend upon them in a careleſs, formal way, or entirely neglect them? O! the reaſon is, they are ſick, heart-ſick, and they are uſing theſe means for their recovery. And did you view yourſelves in the ſame juſt light, you would uſe them too: Yes, you would be as ſtrict, as earneſt, as laborious, as any of them. Why do they not, like you, abandon themſelves, and devote all their time, to ſome worldly purſuit? O! it is becauſe they are ſick, and muſt take time for the uſe of means for their recovery, whatever be omitted. Why are they ſo much afraid of temptation, and keep out of its way? It is becauſe they are afraid of a relapſe, and that ſin, their old diſeaſe, will renew its ſtrength. Whence are they ſo often filled with doubts, and fears, and anxious perplexities? O! it is becauſe the ſymptoms of the diſorder are doubtful, and they know not whether they are in a way of recovery or not. When they are ſatisfied in this point, then they can rejoice, and that with a joy more noble than you are capable of.

And,

And, poor ſick ſouls, be of good cheer, you ſhall yet be healed. Yes, there is balm in Gilead; there is a Phyſician there; Jeſus can heal you: and bleſſed be his name, he is as willing as he is able. Continue ſtedfaſt in the uſe of the means appointed for your recovery, and he will make them efficacious. Yes, theſe ſick ſouls of yours ſhall yet be as healthy and vigorous as an angel, and you ſhall ere long be advanced to the region of immortal health, where the inhabitants no more ſay, I am ſick; where you ſhall breathe a pure ſalubrious air, agreeable to your delicate conſtitutions, and be vigorous and lively for ever.

Do not think much of it, that a diſeaſe ſo inveterate and mortal ſhould be painful and difficult in the cure. The operation will not laſt long; and if it does but ſucceed, the pain and ſelf-denial will be infinitely more than compenſated.

The deep ſenſe of your diſorder is often diſcouraging to you: O! you are afraid it will at laſt prove mortal. But this very thing ought to encourage you. The perſons that I cannot ſpeak one comfortable word to, are not of your character; they are the ſecure, whole-hearted ſinners; but for you there is ſtrong conſolation: ſo ſtrong that it may bear down all your fears before it. The ſenſe of your diſorder qualifies you for the Phyſician, and renders you proper objects of his care. The poor, the maimed, the halt, the blind, the broken-hearted, are the characters of the perſons that he has to do with, and who are recovering under his hands. And are not theſe your characters! They are indeed humbling and mortifying; but, O! they are encouraging, as they prepare you for Chriſt's healing care.

But as for you, whole-hearted ſinners, I muſt pronounce you loſt and dead ſouls. Jeſus himſelf has declared, that he has no buſineſs with ſuch as you. And if he caſts you off, O! what other phyſician can you employ? Alas! you will die in your ſins!—Die in your ſins! O! dreadful! better die in a ditch, or a dungeon,

dungeon, than die in your ſins! Therefore now labour to be ſenſible of your diſorder, while it is curable; for all that are not healed in this life, are given up as incurable for ever. Now apply to Chriſt as a Phyſician, for he is willing to undertake your cure!

SERMON LIII.

A *SIGHT* OF *CHRIST* THE DESIRE AND DELIGHT OF *SAINTS* IN ALL AGES. *

JOHN viii. 56. *Your father Abraham rejoiced* [earneſtly deſired] *to ſee my day; and he ſaw it, and was glad.*

WHEN we ſee the crowd, the unthinking majority of mankind in our day, neglect the Lord Jeſus, we ſee nothing new. This neglect is indeed ſtupid, ungrateful, criminal, and extremely affecting and lamentable; but in this reſpect, as well as others, *there is no new thing under the ſun.* The bleſſed Jeſus has been deſpiſed and rejected of men, in every age, ever ſince ſin firſt entered into the world, and raiſed enmity againſt him in the mind of man.

But, bleſſed be God, ſuch excellency has attracted love and admiration in every age. He has been loved and adored, not only by the angels, who know him beſt, and are ſpectators of his glory in his native heaven, where he keeps his court in conſpicuous ſplendor, but alſo by ſome poor ſinners of the race of man, in every period of time, ſince his glory firſt dawned upon

* A Sacramental Sermon.

upon the world in that early promiſe, *The ſeed of the woman ſhall bruiſe the ſerpent's head.* Gen. iii. 15. John, and his cotemporary chriſtians, who lived upon earth when *the word was made fleſh, and dwelt among men,* beheld his glory, God-like glory, *as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.* John i. 14. In theſe dregs of time, *when iniquity abounds, and the love of many waxes cold,* there are ſome, nay, there are many ſcattered here and there through the world, who believe in and love an unſeen Saviour; and, while they believe and love, *rejoice with joy unſpeakable and full of glory.* 1 Pet. i. 8. Abraham, Iſaac, and Jacob alſo, and all the pious patriarchs, who lived in the early dawn of the goſpel-light, looked forward with eager eyes to the promiſed and expected riſing of the ſun of righteouſneſs. His beams were but faintly reflected upon them; yet they could diſtinguiſh his light from that of every inferior luminary. They foreſaw ſome illuſtrious perſonage, ſuperior to themſelves, and all the ordinary meſſengers of God, about to appear in the world; and though it does not appear to me that they diſtinctly knew who he ſhould be, or what ſhould be the peculiarities of his office, and how he ſhould perform it, * yet they expected him under the welcome character of a Deliverer, and that in ſome way which divine wiſdom would appoint he ſhould bring ſalvation to penitent ſinners. Thus Jeſus congratulates his diſciples upon their peculiar privilege, above the beſt men of the preceding times: *Bleſſed are your eyes, for they ſee; and your ears, for they hear: for verily I ſay unto you, that many prophets and righteous men have deſired to ſee thoſe things which ye ſee, and have not ſeen them: and to hear thoſe things*

* It is evident, that the apoſtles before Chriſt's reſurrection, though they enjoyed the light not only of the ancient types, promiſes, and propheſies, but alſo of many inſtructions from his own lips, yet were ignorant of his death and reſurrection, the nature and extent of his kingdom, and many other important peculiarities of the goſpel. And much more ſo, may we ſuppoſe, were the prophets and good men of ancient times. Several great divines have, I think, repreſented their faith as much more particular and diſtinct than it appears to have been.

things which ye hear, and have not heard them. Matt. xiii. 16, 17. Their desiring to hear and see these things, which the gospel reveals, implies that they had some general imperfect knowledge of them; for there can be no desire at all of a thing entirely unknown: but their knowledge was indistinct and obscure, and not satisfactory to their pious curiosity. Therefore, as St. Peter informs us, the prophets did not fully understand their own prophesies, but *inquired and searched diligently concerning the salvation and grace* now brought to us; *searching what, or what manner of time the spirit of Christ, which was in them, did signify, when it testified beforehand of the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow; to whom it was revealed, that not they, but we should fully enjoy the advantage of their own prophesies, or that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things which are now reported unto you, by them that have preached the gospel unto you, with the Holy Ghost sent down from Heaven; which things,* not only the prophets, but even *the angels* of Heaven, those superior intelligencers, *desire to look into* and study. 1 Pet. i. 10—12.

To the same purpose St. Paul speaks concerning Abraham, Noah, and the other pious patriarchs: *These all died in faith, not having received the promises;* that is, the accomplishment of them, *but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them;* that is, they saw by faith, though afar off, at the distance of thousands of years, the blessings contained in those early promises, particularly that great, all-comprehending blessing, the Messiah; and were persuaded they should be fulfilled in due time, and embraced them with eager affection and confidence, as their highest hope and happiness.

This is the influence which even the faint discovery of a Saviour had upon good men many ages ago; but St. Paul tells us, whose privilege it is to live in gospel-day, that *God has provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect,* Heb. xi. 13, 40. for us he hath provided the clear revelation

of

of the goſpel; and ſhall not this have a proportionable influence upon us? We ſhould at leaſt be as much affected with theſe things as Abraham, who was far inferior to us in external advantages; and how Abraham was affected, we are told by Jeſus himſelf in the text: *Abraham rejoiced to ſee my day; and he ſaw it, and was glad.*

The Jews, in the context, are pleading the cauſe of their own pride and ſelf-confidence, againſt ſome juſt reflections which Chriſt had made upon them. When he inſinuates that they were ſlaves to ſin, and therefore ſtood in need of freedom from him, they reſent it as a ſcandalous imputation, intolerable to a people ſo proud and tenacious of their liberty; and either not underſtanding in what ſenſe he meant they were ſlaves, or imagining that they could not be the ſervants of ſin, who were the natural deſcendants of Abraham, they think to defend themſelves by pleading, *We are Abraham's ſeed, and were never in bondage to any man: how ſayeſt thou, Ye ſhall be made free!* I cannot ſee how they could have made good this aſſertion; for they had been in bondage to the Babylonians, the Syrians, and the Greeks, and were then in ſubjection to the Roman empire; but what is there ſo falſe or abſurd but men will plead in their own defence when once they have renounced the goſpel! Jeſus in his anſwer tells them, that the diſpute at preſent was not, Who was their natural father? but, Who was their father in a moral ſenſe? And he lays down this principle, upon which to ſettle their moral genealogy, namely, That they were his children, whom they reſembled in temper and practice. Now they did not reſemble Abraham, much leſs God, whom they alſo called their Father; and therefore they were not the children of Abraham, or of God, in ſuch a ſenſe as to be free from ſlavery to ſin; which was the ſenſe then under conſideration: but they reſembled the Devil, in doing his luſts, and particularly in their love of falſhood, and enmity to truth; and therefore, ſays he,

he, *Ye are of your father the Devil.* In the progreſs of the debate the Jews were offended, becauſe Chriſt inſinuated that he was greater than Abraham and the prophets. And my text may be conſidered as referring both to this and the former argument. As referring to the laſt, it may be thus underſtood: "Abraham himſelf was ſenſible how much I am ſuperior to him; for he rejoiced at the diſtant ſight of my day, when a much greater Perſon than he ſhould appear upon the ſtage of the world, from whom himſelf, as well as his poſterity, and all nations of the earth, ſhould receive the moſt important bleſſings." As referring to the former, the meaning may be: "You cannot be the genuine children of Abraham, in the ſenſe now under conſideration; for you are not at all like him. You live in my day, and yet rejoice not in it; but he earneſtly deſired a ſight of it, and rejoiced in the ſight, though faint and afar off. His diſpoſition and yours towards me are entirely different, and therefore you cannot be his true ſpiritual children." Thus, in both theſe views, the text contains a concluſive argument in vindication of Jeſus Chriſt, and in confutation of his enemies.

Your father Abraham rejoiced to ſee my day. The day of Chriſt primarily ſignifies the time when he appeared in the fleſh, and converſed with men. So the days of John the Baptiſt, the days of Noah, &c. ſignify the time when John the Baptiſt and Noah lived upon earth. Matt. xi. 12. and chap. xxiv. 37. But we are to conſider the Lord Jeſus as coming into the world under a public character; that is, as a Saviour of ſinners, and as the improver of the Moſaic and Patriarchal religion, by the introduction of the goſpel-diſpenſation: and therefore the day of Chriſt, which Abraham deſired to ſee, muſt ſignify the time when he ſhould appear upon earth as a great Prophet, to make a more perfect revelation of the will of God; the time when he ſhould offer the great propitiatory ſacrifice for the ſins of the world, of which the ſacrifices of former diſ-

penſations were but types and ſhadows; the time when he ſhould receive dominion, glory, and a kingdom from the Ancient of Days, which ſhould not be confined to the Jews, but extend to *all people, nations, and languages*, Dan. vii. 14. or, in other words, the time when the great radical promiſe to Abraham ſhould be fulfilled, *That in his ſeed all the nations of the earth ſhould be bleſſed*, Gen. xxii. 18. the time when the diſpenſation of the goſpel ſhould be ſet up in its full glory, the moſt perfect diſpenſation of religion on this ſide heaven; which is not to give way to another, like that of Moſes, but to continue to the end of the world. This is the illuſtrious day here intended; and according to this explication, you ſee it includes not only the time of Chriſt's appearance upon earth, but alſo the whole ſpace from that time to the end of the world, or the whole time of the goſpel-diſpenſation. This is a long and glorious day, and in this day it is our happy lot to live. Abraham would have thought himſelf happy to live in the ſame age with us: he would rather have lived in Hanover * than in Canaan with all his riches; and would rather have been a member of our church than the great patriarch of the Jewiſh church.

The time of Chriſt's appearance upon earth, and of the goſpel-diſpenſation introduced by him, may be called a day, not only in conformity to the uſual language of ſcripture, in which the time of a perſon's life, the duration of a thing, or the time allotted for any buſineſs, is called a day, though it ſhould contain many hundreds or thouſands of natural days; I ſay, it may be called a day, not only on this account, but alſo to intimate, that it is a ſeaſon of light to the moral world, a ſeaſon when the Sun of Righteouſneſs ſhines upon this benighted earth, pierces the glooms of ignorance that covered it, and brings the deepeſt myſteries to light; a ſeaſon, when the perfections of the divine

* The name of a county in Virginia, where this ſermon was *preached.*

divine nature, the way of pardon and acceptance for obnoxious mankind, the wonders of the unſeen world, and the things that belong to our peace are diſplayed in full ſplendor. The night of heathen darkneſs and the twilight of the Abrahamic and Moſaic diſpenſation kindle into day, wherever the goſpel ſhines. Abraham lived in the twilight, or early dawn; and therefore, ſays Chriſt, *he deſired to ſee my day.* It is tranſlated, he *rejoiced* to ſee my day; and it muſt be owned, this is the uſual ſenſe of the original word; * but this cannot be its meaning here, for this would make a needleſs tautology with the laſt part of the verſe, *he was glad.* To rejoice, and to be glad, is the ſame thing: but would hardly be ſenſe to ſay, *Abraham rejoiced to ſee my day, and he ſaw it and rejoiced.* Beſides, to rejoice that he might ſee, ſeems abſurd; for his rejoicing could not be to the end that he might ſee, but becauſe he did ſee. I therefore conclude the word here muſt ſignify a ſtrong tranſport of deſire, and ſhould be rendered, "your father Abraham earneſtly deſired that he might ſee my day: he wiſhed to live in an age when Chriſt and the goſpel ſhould be fully revealed. From the

* *egalleaſato*—Since *agalleomai*, which is commonly uſed metaphorically, and ſignifies *to exult* or *leap for joy*, literally ſignifies *to leap*, why may it not be underſtood literally without a metaphor in this place? As if he had ſaid, "Abraham leaped up, he raiſed himſelf like one endeavouring to catch a glance of ſome diſtant object, that he might ſee the diſtant gleamings of Chriſt's day."—But this new criticiſm I only hint, and ſubmit it to examination.

The editor of theſe Diſcourſes of Mr. Davies, thinks it not improper to ſubjoin a criticiſm upon this word from Mr. Anthony Blackwall.—"I beg my reader's leave, ſays he, to propoſe one conjecture, by putting down *agalleaomai*, as a peculiarity in St. John, ſignifying *to deſire with vehemence*. And this ſenſe affixed to it, which is not ſtrained or unnatural, will ſolve what ſeems to me to be a groſs tautology in our tranſlation. It is this, "he rejoiced to ſee my day, and ſaw it, and was glad;" that is, he was glad to ſee my day, and ſaw it, and ſo was glad.—In this ſignification it runs eaſy and clean, he earneſtly wiſhed or deſired to ſee my day, and ſaw it and rejoiced. The Perſian, Syriac, and Arabic verſions all give it this ſenſe, and the particle *ina* in the original, ſeems to require it.—It is a very natural metonymy, whereby antecedents and conſequents are put for each other." *Sacred Claſſics*, Vol. I. p. 35, 36.

the dawn he looked forward with eager deſire to ſee the ſun riſing, and the heavenly day ſhining around him, revealing to his view thoſe lovely proſpects which were then wrapt in darkneſs. He longed to ſee that illuſtrious Perſonage ſpringing from his ſeed," *in whom all nations ſhould be bleſſed*, " and who was his Lord and Saviour, as well as his ſon."

Nor was his deſire in vain: for Jeſus adds, *he ſaw it;* that is, my day. His deſire was granted, and he was favoured with the ſight he longed for. But here it may be queried, " how, or in what ſenſe, could Abraham be ſaid to ſee Chriſt's day, ſince he died ſo long before his appearance in the fleſh?" To this ſundry anſwers have been given, particularly, 1. That he ſaw Chriſt's day by faith in the promiſes given him, of the accompliſhment of which he was confident; and this confidence inſpired him with joy. *Faith*, ſays the apoſtle, *is the ſubſtance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not ſeen*, Heb. xi. 1. and ſuch was Abraham's faith in the promiſe of a Meſſiah. He ſaw his day by faith, and was perſuaded of his certain appearance, and embraced him, as though he had been then in the reach of his arms. 2. Abraham might be ſaid to ſee the day of Chriſt in that ſtrange tranſaction, the offering up of his own ſon Iſaac. This is the moſt ſtriking typical repreſentation, I think, which we find in the whole Bible, of the manner in which the world ſhould be redeemed by Jeſus Chriſt; namely, by human ſacrifice, and by God's making his own Son a propitiatory ſacrifice, as Abraham was commanded to offer up his; and probably this ſeemingly hard and unnatural trial was impoſed upon him, as a peculiar favour, that he might ſee by a ſignificant action, what he ſo earneſtly longed to ſee, the manner of man's redemption. This welcome ſight he probably had upon mount Moriah, where he went to offer up his only ſon. And the inſcription he, as it were, left upon that mount, may intimate thus much, *In the mount of the Lord it* (that is, the day of Chriſt) *ſhall be ſeen.* Gen. xxii.

xxii. 14. This may alſo be St. Paul's meaning, when he ſays, Abraham received Iſaac from the dead in a figure, or typical repreſentation, which plainly preſignified to him the reſurrection of Chriſt from the dead, without a figure; that is, literally, after he had been actually ſacrificed for the ſins of men. * This appears to me as probable a ſenſe as any. Yet, 3. Perhaps it may mean, that when Jehovah appeared to Abraham in human form, and familiarly converſed with him, it was a prelude to his incarnation, and gave him a clear idea of the day of Chriſt's actual appearance in the fleſh.

But in whatever ſenſe he ſaw it, it was a very welcome and joyful ſight to him; for Jeſus farther tells us, *he ſaw it and was glad.* Light is ſweet; but no light was ſo ſweet to Abraham's eyes as that of *the day of the Son of man.* He ſaw him not as Simeon, when he took him in his arms, and wiſhed that he might never take up any thing elſe, but depart in peace from this world of ſin and ſorrow; but Abraham ſaw him in ſuch a light, as to fill his heart with joy and gladneſs, though only through the medium of faith, and not of ſenſe.

Theſe remarks may ſuffice to explain the text, as it refers to this patriarch: but it is your perſonal advantage I aim at, and therefore I ſhall make ſome reflections upon it, as it may be accommodated to you: and the reflections are ſuch as theſe:

That the diſpenſation of the goſpel may be called a bright and illuſtrious day:

That it is a day which good men under former diſpenſations earneſtly deſired a ſight of: That

* Heb. xi. 19. Dr. Warburton in his Divine Legation, offers ſo many plauſible things in favour of this ſenſe, that I think it has ſome conſiderable appearance of probability. And thus he and Wolfius apply their text, urging that *en parabole*, anſwers to and ſignifies a typical repreſentation. The word *kai* prefixed, *kai en parabole* which ſhews there is a particular ſtreſs to be laid upon *en parabole*, confirms this expoſition: as if he had ſaid, "he received him from the dead, not only as he narrowly eſcaped death, but alſo in a figure; that is, as a figure or type of ſomething future."

That good men earneſtly deſire clear diſcoveries of Jeſus Chriſt, and his goſpel:

That theſe deſires ſhall be accompliſhed: and,

That the accompliſhment of them affords great joy.

I. The diſpenſation of the goſpel may be called a bright and illuſtrious day.

When John the Baptiſt, the forerunner of Chriſt, was born, the morning-ſtar aroſe, or as his father Zacharias expreſſes it, *The day-ſpring from on high viſited us.* Jeſus is *the ſun of righteouſneſs;* Mal. iv. 2. *the light of the world;* John viii. 12. and chap. xii. 46. *a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of his people Iſrael;* Luke ii. 32. and when he made his appearance in the world, then, we are told, *The people that ſat in darkneſs ſaw great light; and to them who ſat in the region and ſhadow of death, light ſprung up.* Matt. iv. 16. To carry on the metaphor with uniformity, the goſpel is called the day of ſalvation, 2 Cor. vi. 2. the light, 2 Cor. iv. 4. a marvellous light, 1 Pet. ii. 9. a true light ſhining, when the darkneſs is paſt, 1 John ii. 8. and chriſtians are ſaid to be light, Eph. v. 8.—*the children of the light and the day.* 1 Theſſ. v. 5.

There is good reaſon for the uſe of this ſignificant metaphorical language; for as the day diſcovers the fair face of nature, and opens her lovely proſpects to view, which were unſeen while covered with darkneſs, ſo the goſpel reveals the perfections of God, the wonderful ſcheme of Providence, the beauties of holineſs, the nature of true religion, the duty of man in all its extent, the wonders of the ſcheme of redemption through Jeſus Chriſt, and the method in which obnoxious ſinners of the race of man may be reconciled to God, the proſpects of life and immortality, and the important realities of the eternal world. All theſe are brought to light by the goſpel, after they had long been concealed, or ſeen but faintly through the glimmering light of reaſon in the heathen, and the typical or prophetical revelation of the Moſaic diſpenſation.

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The goſpel-day, like a light ſhining in a dark place, pierces the darkneſs of the human heart, reveals the myſteries of iniquity, and the depths of Satan there, and diſcovers ſin in all its native deformities. This penetrating light, when enforced by his power who firſt commanded the light to ſhine out of darkneſs, has flaſhed conviction upon many a ſecure conſcience, and opened the moſt ſurpriſing diſcoveries to many a blind mind. The goſpel, like clear day-light, ſhews us the way of duty and happineſs, for which the world had long groped in darkneſs, ſo that now we may walk in it without ſtumbling; for *if any man walk in the day, he ſtumbleth not, becauſe he ſeeth the light.*— John xi. 9, 10.

Divine things are not only brought to light by the goſpel, but alſo repreſented in the moſt amiable and engaging view; eſpecially when there is not only a clear medium without, but the organ of ſpiritual viſion, the mind, is rectified ſo as to be able to perceive thoſe objects in this medium. If we ſhould ſuppoſe a man had ſpent twenty years of his life in darkneſs, and never ſeen nature about him in that lovely and magnificent view in which it appears through the medium of light, and ſhould he be ſuddenly brought into the light, how would he be overwhelmed with delightful aſtoniſhment at the firſt ſight of the univerſe.— What amazing proſpects, what new and glorious wonders would open to his eyes! How different would the face of nature appear from the view he had of it while an inhabitant of darkneſs! Thus is the ſinner ſurprized, when not only the goſpel ſhines round him, but his mind is alſo enlightened to view divine things in that heavenly light. Then, as St. Peter expreſſes it, he is brought *out of darkneſs into God's marvellous light*, 1 Pet. ii. 9. a light that repreſents the moſt marvellous things to his aſtoniſhed ſight. Then in what a new and glorious light does the great God appear, and all the truths revealed in the goſpel! What new and ſurpriſing views has he of himſelf, of ſin, and of

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the eternal world! all is real, intereſting and affecting! O! my brethren, have you ever been introduced into this marvellous light? or, are you, like the birds of night, lovers and inhabitants of darkneſs ſtill?

Again, In that darkneſs which overſpread the world before the introduction of chriſtianity, the wicked ſpirits of hell, like beaſts of prey, roamed this wilderneſs and diſcovered great power in their oracles, in poſſeſſing the bodies of men, &c. But when the goſpel ſhone upon the world in its meridian glory, then theſe terrors of the night fled to their den, and could no more roam at large, as they had done.

The day is the time for work and action: ſo the goſpel-day is the ſeaſon to work out our ſalvation. It is not a time for ſleep and ſloth, but for labour and action. *This is the accepted time; this is the day of ſalvation.*

This, my brethren, is the glorious and bleſſed day in which we live. Let us therefore inquire, *Are we the children of the light and of the day?* For this purpoſe inquire, whether it is day within, as well as without? that is, whether your minds have been divinely enlightened within, as the light of the goſpel ſhines round you without? Is not that ſacred light to ſome of you like the ſun to a blind man? that is, it makes day without him, but all is dark to him, and he ſees nothing! Are there not ſome of you blind to the glory of God in the goſpel, to the evil of ſin, and the great realities of the eternal world! The light ſhines indeed, but it ſhines in a thick malignant darkneſs, that comprehends it not; a darkneſs impenetrable even to the bright beams of the Sun of Righteouſneſs. Is not your heart a dungeon of darkneſs, where the vileſt luſts crawl, like toads and ſerpents? Do you not hate the light, and refuſe to come into the light, leſt your evil deeds ſhould be reproved? Do you not practiſe the works of darkneſs, works that will not bear the public view, much leſs the examination of the ſupreme tribunal? Have you ever beheld *the glory*

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of God in the face of Jesus Christ, the glory of the word made flesh, and dwelling among men, as the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth? O! have you ever seen how lovely, how suitable, and how glorious that Saviour is, who is revealed in the gospel? I beg you would put these questions home to your hearts, that you may know whether you are the children of the light, or whether you are in darkness even until now.

If you have hitherto chosen darkness rather than light, remember, the gospel, which has lighted many a pilgrim to heaven, will only shew you the way to hell, and bring you, as it were, to a more horrible precipice, from whence you will fall with the greater violence into the pit. If you perish from under the gospel, it will be with a peculiarly aggravated destruction. *Tophet has been prepared of old;* and, like a furnace always supplied, it has been heating more and more for thousands of years, and now, under the gospel, it is heated more than ever; and the hottest place there is reserved for you, if you still resist the light, and continue in darkness. O! remember who it was that made that awful declaration, *This is the condemnation;* that is, this is the occasion of the most aggravated condemnation, *that light is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil.* John iii. 19. *If the gospel be hid, it is only to them that are lost.* 2 Cor. iv. 3.

But I doubt not but sundry of you not only have day without, but within you: *God, who commanded light to shine out of darkness, has shined in your hearts, to give you the light of the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ. Blessed are your eyes, for they see.* And O! what affecting sights have they seen! what vileness and deformity in sin! and what beauty in holiness! what corruption and depravity in yourselves, and what glory and excellency in God! what meanness and unworthiness in yourselves, and what loveliness, what all-perfect righteousness, with attractive

glory in Jeſus Chriſt! what vanity in this world, and what reality and importance in the world to come! Well, this day is but the dawn of immortal day, which you ſhall enjoy in heaven. You are children of light, and you are haſtening to that world, where God himſelf ſhall be your light, and there ſhall be no more night. Therefore, *walk as the children of light, and let your light ſo ſhine before men, that they, by ſeeing your good works, may glorify your Father which is in heaven.*

Bleſs God that the goſpel ſhines around you, and opens ſuch diſcoveries to your view. To-day it ſhews you a feaſt of fat things for hungry ſouls; it ſhews you that ſtrange ſight, which ſtruck all nature with horror, when it firſt appeared; I mean the Son of God hanging on a croſs, and expiring there for guilty men. This ordinance is a bright ray of evangelical light; and it helps you to ſee the love and agonies of Jeſus, the great atonement he made for ſin, and the method of your pardon and ſalvation.—Come then, ye children of light; come and gaze, and wonder at theſe aſtoniſhing ſights!

Again, Since it is day-time with us, let us ſhake off ſlumber, and riſe to work. Awake to righteouſneſs, ſinners! Awake, and call upon God, and betake yourſelves to work; to the important, but long-delayed and neglected work of ſalvation. The night of death is coming when no man can work: then the Sun of Righteouſneſs will be ſet, and the day of the goſpel be over, as to you; and the Lord will cauſe darkneſs, and your feet will ſtumble on the dark mountains, and the ſhadows of the everlaſting night ſhall be ſtretched out over your heads. Now, therefore, riſe, and do the work of life: do it now, in this your day; or it muſt remain for ever undone. And, ye who are the children of the light, abound in the work of the Lord while your day laſts. Never let him find you idle, but always buſy in doing good. Do not you ſleep, as do others; but watch and be ſober. God has diſtinguiſhed you with his grace, above thouſands of his eminent

eminent servants; and this lays you under peculiar obligations of duty to him:—Which leads me to add,

II. That the dispensation of the gospel is a day, which good men under former dispensations earnestly desired a sight of.

The most that they generally knew was, that religion should be much improved, and the world receive great advantage, by some illustrious person that should arise;—and they desired themselves to share in that improvement and advantage. They had a general persuasion that God was reconcilable, but, O! to know the person by whom, and the manner in which this reconciliation was to be brought about! They had many intimations that it was to be brought about by sacrifice, or the offering up the innocent for the guilty; but they wanted nearer views of this great mystery. They had ordinances of worship divinely instituted; but these were so expensive, burdensome, and comparatively carnal, that it is no wonder they looked forward with eager eyes to the time of reformation, when a more easy, spiritual and noble method of worship would be introduced: they hoped for happiness beyond the grave, and believed a future state of rewards and punishments; but the sanctions of the dispensations under which they lived consisted so much in temporal rewards and punishments, as to render those of the world to come less clear and affecting.—No wonder then they longed for gospel-day, by which life alone and immortality are brought fully to light, and all doubts and suspicions entirely removed. In short, so much darkness, uncertainty and perplexity attended many things of great importance, that are now clearly revealed, that it was natural and unavoidable for every good man that was concerned to please God and enjoy his favour, to desire farther satisfaction, and look forward with eager eyes to the rising Sun, which should cast a divine light upon these interesting secrets.

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Now this happineſs, which they ſo ardently deſired, we enjoy: and ſhall we make light of it, and neglect to improve our peculiar privileges! How would Abraham have rejoiced to hear what we hear this day, and ſit down at the ſacred table, which is now prepared for us! And ſhall we dare to neglect it, or attend upon it in a languid, careleſs, irreverent manner! Abraham would have willingly exchanged his perſonal converſe with Jehovah, and all his privileges as the patriarch of the Jewiſh church, for the privilege of the meaneſt chriſtian among us. And ſhall not we eſteem and improve what he eſteemed ſo very highly, and longed for ſo ardently? Brethren, if we do not all crowd into heaven in a body, it is our own fault in a peculiar degree. Our external advantages for religion are greater than thoſe of Abraham, the friend of God; than thoſe of Moſes, who *converſed with him face to face, as a man with his friend;* of David, the man after God's own heart; and of the many thouſands that entered the gates of heaven, before Jeſus left it to make his appearance in our world. And did they obtain ſalvation by a Redeemer ſo little known, and ſhall any of us periſh, when he is ſo clearly revealed to us, and ſo explicitly propoſed to our acceptance? God forbid! Whatever became of ſinners in Canaan, or Greece, or Rome, where they had prophets or philoſophers, but no Jeſus to ſhew them the path of life; O! let ſinners in Hanover preſs into the kingdom of heaven. For ſhame, let them ſeek ſalvation, leſt Jews and Heathens, and all the world, riſe up in judgment againſt them.—But I obſerved from the text,

III. That good men earneſtly deſire clear diſcoveries of Chriſt and his goſpel.

This was not peculiar to Abraham and the Old Teſtament ſaints, but it is common to all good men in all ages and countries: and if you belong to their number, this is your diſpoſition. O! how you long to know more of Jeſus, and dive deeper into the myſ-

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teries of his goſpel! How are you mortified and grieved for your ignorance! And how ſweet is every beam of heavenly light, that breaks in upon your minds, and diſcovers more of the glory of Chriſt to you, and the wonders of his goſpel! This was your end (was it not?) in coming hither to-day; and for this end you intend to ſit down at his table, even that you may ſee the Lord Jeſus in an advantageous point of view by faith, and be more charmed with his glories! Is not this what you deſire and long for! Well, for your comfort, I can aſſure you,

IV. That theſe deſires ſhall be accompliſhed.

Abraham deſired to ſee Chriſt's day, and he ſaw it: his deſires were fulfilled. And he was not the only one to whom divine veracity performed its promiſe, and divine goodneſs beſtowed its bounties. No, the ſame bleſſing has been conferred upon every ſoul, in every age and country, that, like him, earneſtly deſired Jeſus Chriſt. This deſire preſuppoſes a deep ſenſe of our guilt and depravity, and of our inability to make atonement for our ſin, or to ſanctify our nature, and prepare ourſelves for heaven, that region of perfect holineſs: and it alſo implies a general conviction of the glory and excellency of Jeſus Chriſt, and his ſuitableneſs to our caſe. Deſires proceeding from ſuch a ſenſe of conviction, are lively and operative, and will ſet us in action to obtain the thing deſired. They are not lazy inactive deſires, which perſons profeſs, and yet remain all the day idle, and never exert their utmoſt ſtrength in earneſt endeavours to obtain an intereſt in Chriſt, as their ſupreme good and higheſt happineſs. Such active deſires are connected with the promiſes of eternal veracity, which almighty power will certainly perform. Therefore, fear not, ye that ſeek Jeſus who was crucified. You ſhall not always pine away with hungry, eager deſires and pantings for him, but your utmoſt wiſhes ſhall be accompliſhed in the enjoyment of the good you deſire. And if ever you have had any experience in this caſe, I need hardly tell you,

V. That

V. That the accompliſhment of theſe deſires afford great joy.

Abraham had his deſire of ſeeing Chriſt's day fulfilled; and it inſpired him with joy: *he ſaw it, and was glad.* How tranſporting, to view the glory of God ſhining in the goſpel! to contemplate the love, the grace, and all-ſufficient fulneſs of Jeſus! to feel the lively emotions of proper affections towards him, and all thoſe heavenly exerciſes of mind, which attend the ſight of Jeſus Chriſt in the goſpel! What is heaven, but the day of Chriſt; a brighter day indeed, but enlightened by the ſame ſun that ſhines in the goſpel: *the glory of God enlightens it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.* Rev. xxi. 23. Therefore as much as you enjoy of this ſacred light, ſo much of heaven do you enjoy on earth.

And now, to conclude.—You have heard of Jeſus Chriſt, and of the diſpoſition of Abraham, and all good men towards him. But is not this all myſtery and unintelligible talk to ſome of you? You never have experienced any thing like it. And can you expect ſalvation from a neglected unknown Saviour? Or are you able to ſave yourſelves without him? Alas! both are impoſſible. Therefore, my brethren, this day admit the conviction of your guilt and danger, be thoroughly convinced of your own unworthineſs of ſalvation by natural means, or the guidance of your own wiſdom, pray earneſtly for ſpiritual help from above, in and through a glorious and all-powerful Mediator, and never be eaſy till you get out of darkneſs into day.

As for the children of light, let them ſurround the table of their Lord, and there place themſelves under the warm enlivening beams of the Sun of Righteouſneſs.

SERMON

SERMON LIV.

THE *LAW* AND *GOSPEL*.

GAL. iii. 23. *But before faith came, we were kept under the law, ſhut up unto the faith which ſhould afterwards be revealed.*

IN ſuch a time of general deadneſs and ſecurity as this, it may really afford me painful perplexity what ſubject to chooſe. Now this and now that occurs to my mind, and engages my thoughts to purſue it for a while; but after many fluctuations and perplexities, I have at length fixed upon this text, and determined to open to you the nature of the Law and Goſpel, and your concern with each of them: and I have this encouragement, that this may be ſtyled an Apoſtolic ſubject, by way of eminence, and is that very doctrine which did ſuch mighty execution among the Jews and Gentiles, and converted thouſands to the faith of Chriſt, upon the firſt publication of Chriſtianity. The Law and Goſpel were the grand topics of St. Paul's preaching, if we may judge of his ſermons by his Epiſtles; for in his Epiſtles, particularly thoſe to the Romans and Galatians, he inſiſts at large upon theſe ſubjects. Theſe may alſo be properly called the doctrine of the reformation from Popery; for no ſooner did that ſacred light dawn, than it began immediately to clear up the nature and the difference between the Law and the Goſpel, and the condition of mankind as under the one or the other of theſe conſtitutions. Luther, in particular, made this the great ſcope of his preaching and writings; and he wrote an excellent commentary upon this epiſtle to the Galatians for this

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very purpoſe. And who knows but ſuch a ſubject as this, which has been the ancient weapon for demoliſhing the kingdom of Satan, and wounding impenitent hearts, may do ſome execution, through the divine bleſſing, even when managed by my unſkilful hand? Be the event what it will, in the name of the Lord, I would make the attempt.

I ſhall be the ſhorter at preſent in explaining the text, becauſe the whole of the following diſcourſe will tend to reflect light upon it.

Faith, in my text, and in ſundry places in this epiſtle, ſeems to have a complex ſignification: it ſignifies the object of faith revealed in the goſpel, or the method of ſalvation through faith in the righteouſneſs of Chriſt; and it alſo ſignifies the grace of faith in the ſoul, or a hearty compliance with this way of ſalvation; ſo that this expreſſion, *before faith came*, refers to the time before the doctrine of faith was revealed in the goſpel to the Galatians, and before the grace of faith was wrought in their hearts. Here it may be proper to obſerve, that the members of the primitive church in general, and particularly that in Galatia, were brought under the goſpel-diſpenſation, and embraced the doctrine of the goſpel by faith at one and the ſame time. But they were not, like us, educated under the goſpel-diſpenſation; for part of them had been Jews, educated under the Moſaic diſpenſation, which, by way of eminence, is frequently called the Law; and, as they were under the legal diſpenſation, they were generally under the influence of a legal ſpirit; that is, they ſought for juſtification by their own works of obedience to that law.

Another part of them had been educated Heathens, and were deſtitute at once of the revelation of the goſpel, and of faith in it. Of this ſort the generality of the Galatians had been. And yet St. Paul repreſents them alſo as having been under the law, not the Jewiſh or Moſaic law, which the Gentiles had no concern with, but the law of nature, which is univerſally binding

ing upon all mankind. And as they were under this law, they were alſo poſſeſſed of a legal ſpirit; that is, they ſought ſalvation by their own obedience to it, as the only way which they knew, and which was natural to them. But, when the goſpel-diſpenſation was ſet up in the world, and the doctrine of faith preached to them, they immediately believed, and ſo were freed from the outward diſpenſation of the law, and from a legal ſpirit, at once; and they heard the doctrine, and received the outward diſpenſation of the goſpel, and ſavingly believed, "at one and the ſame time." Hence the apoſtle ſpeaks of their being delivered from the diſpenſation of the law, and from a legal ſpirit, and of their being brought under the goſpel-diſpenſation, and cordially believing the goſpel-doctrine, in the ſame language "as one and the ſame thing:" and what he ſays is ſometimes equally applicable to the outward diſpenſation and the inward temper denominated from it, and ſometimes more pertinent to the one than to the other. So in my text, the time *before faith came*, is applicable to the ſtate of the Galatians, while under the diſpenſation of the law, and under a legal or ſelf-righteous temper; and while they had neither heard the doctrine of faith, nor received the grace of faith. And when in oppoſition to this (v. 25.) he obſerves, *after that faith is come, we are no longer under the law as a ſchoolmaſter;* he means both after the preaching of the goſpel, and after it was received by faith. Many more inſtances of this might be given; particularly chap. iv. 3, 5. Rom. vii. 1, 7.

From hence we may infer, that what St. Paul ſays concerning the ſtate of thoſe that were under the law, as that *they are in bondage, ſhut up under ſin, under the curſe, that the law is their ſchoolmaſter to bring them to Chriſt*, &c. is not to be confined to the Jews, or to perſons in that age, but may, in part at leaſt, be applied to us, though we have been educated under the goſpel, and never were under the Jewiſh law; for we may be poſſeſſed of a legal ſpirit, though we live un-

der the goſpel, and never were ſubject to the Moſaic œconomy. Our obſervation alſo is ſupported from hence, that the apoſtle repreſents the Galatians (the main body of whom were Gentiles, and had no more connection with the law of Moſes than we) as under the law, under the curſe of the law, &c. in this ſenſe; and as freed from the law by their faith. Therefore, though the outward diſpenſation of faith came into our parts of the world before we were born, yet we may apply the text to ourſelves, and ſay, *before faith came;* that is, before faith came into our hearts: before the evangelical grace was wrought in us by the power of God, *we were kept under the law;* the original word is very emphatical, * we were priſoners under cloſe confinement, we were held in cuſtody by the law, as by a ſtrong guard, to prevent all eſcape. *We were ſhut up to the faith.* Here again the original word is very emphatical, † we were encloſed all round; every way of eſcape was ſtopt, but only that of faith: we were ſhut up to this way: in this way we were obliged to fly, or to continue for ever bound faſt under condemnation; *ſhut up to the faith which ſhould afterwards be revealed.* This alſo may be accommodated to us, and ſignify the clear diſcovery of the goſpel to our minds, as an object of faith, by that illumination of the ſpirit, which is the cauſe of it. But it is more properly and peculiarly applicable to the Galatians, while as yet the doctrine of faith in the goſpel was not revealed to them. They were held in cuſtody by the law till that happy time came, and then, upon their believing the goſpel, they were ſet at liberty.

My preſent deſign is to lay down ſome propoſitions for the explication of the apoſtolic doctrine concerning the law and the goſpel, that you may ſee in what ſenſe mankind are kept priſoners by the law, under condemnation, and ſhut up to the faith; or to the method of juſtification through the righteouſneſs of Chriſt, as the only way of eſcape.

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* *Ephrouroumetha.* † *Sugkekliesmenon.*

The propoſitions I would lay down are theſe:—That all mankind in all ages are under a law to God: That this law was firſt given to man, in a ſtate of innocence, in the form of a covenant of works, by which he was to obtain happineſs: That it has paſſed through ſeveral editions, and received ſeveral additions and modifications in different ages: That this law requires perfect, perſonal, and perpetual obedience: That it is impoſſible for any of the ſons of men to be juſtified and ſaved by this conſtitution: That therefore God has graciouſly made another conſtitution, namely, the goſpel, by which ſinners may be juſtified and ſaved through the righteouſneſs of Jeſus Chriſt: That all mankind are under the law, as a covenant of works, till they willingly forſake it, and fly to the goſpel for refuge by faith in Chriſt: And conſequently, that they are ſhut up by the law to this method of ſalvation, as the only way of eſcape.

I. "All mankind, in all ages, are under a law to God." This can be denied by none who grant there is ſuch a thing as ſin or duty; for where there is no law, there can be no duty or tranſgreſſion. If murder or blaſphemy are univerſally evil with regard to all mankind, in all ages, it muſt be becauſe they are forbidden by a law univerſally and perpetually binding. If the love of God, or juſtice towards men, be a duty binding upon all mankind, in all ages, it muſt be becauſe it is enjoined by ſome law of univerſal and perpetual obligation. This cannot be diſputed with regard to the Jews, the ſubjects of the Moſaic law, who are ſaid, by way of eminence, to be under the law: And the apoſtle infers, that thoſe who lived between Adam and Moſes were alſo under a law, from the puniſhment of death inflicted upon them; for as where there is no law there can be no tranſgreſſion, ſo where there is no law there can be no puniſhment; for puniſhment is the execution of the penalty of a law upon an offender, for tranſgreſſing the precept. Thus St. Paul reaſons (Rom. v. 13, 14.) *until the law;* that

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is, all the time from Adam's fall till the giving of the law at mount Sinai (about 2536 years) *ſin was in the world;* and conſequently there was a law then in force; *for ſin is not imputed where there is no law.* But ſin was evidently imputed in that period; for, though the Sinai law was not then publiſhed, *nevertheleſs death,* the penalty of the law *reigneth with dreadful uncontrouled power, from Adam to Moſes.* Thus you ſee the patriarchal age was under a law to God. And as to the Gentiles, though they had not the revealed law, yet they were not lawleſs, but bound by the law of nature; of the contents of which their own reaſon and conſcience informed them in the moſt important particulars. Thus St. Paul tells us, *that the Gentiles, who have not the revealed law,* perform by nature the part of a law, * and therefore *are a law to themſelves, the works of the law being written in their hearts.* Rom. ii. 14, 15. As to us, who live under the goſpel, *we are not,* as the apoſtle obſerves, *without law to God, but under the law to Chriſt* (1 Cor. ix. 21.) that is, we are ſtill under a law to God, with all thoſe endearing obligations ſuperadded, which reſult from the gracious goſpel of Chriſt. And we cannot ſuppoſe the contrary, without ſuppoſing that the goſpel has put an end to all religion and morality, and ſet us at liberty to all manner of vice and impiety; for if we are ſtill obliged to religion and virtue, it muſt be by ſome conſtitution that has the general nature of a law. St. Paul rejects the thought with horror, that the law is made void by the goſpel. *Do we then make void the law by faith? Far be the thought, nay, we eſtabliſh the law.* Rom. iii. 31. This firſt propoſition therefore is ſufficiently evident, "That all mankind, in all ages, and under every diſpenſation of religion, are under a law to God." Let us now advance a ſtep farther:

II. This law was firſt of all given to man in a ſtate of innocence, under the model of a covenant of works;

* So I would chooſe to render *phuſei ta tou nomou poie;* and thus it agrees better with what follows, *heautois eiſe nomos.*

works; that is, it was the conſtitution, by obedience to which he was to ſecure the favour of God, and to obtain everlaſting felicity. It was his duty to obſerve it with a view to obtain immortality and happineſs by it; and theſe bleſſings he was to ſecure by his own works of obedience. That the law was firſt publiſhed to man with this view, is evident from many paſſages of ſcripture, particularly from that often repeated maxim of the apoſtle, *The man that doth theſe things ſhall live by them* (Rom. x. 5. Gal. vii. 12. ſee alſo Lev. xviii. 5. Neh. ix. 29. Ezek. xx. 11, 13, 21.) nay, he tells us expreſsly, *that the commandment was ordained unto life* (Rom. vii. 10.) that is, it was appointed as a plan by which man was to obtain life. Hence Chriſt aſſures the lawyer, who had repeated the ſubſtance of the law to him, *This do, and thou ſhalt live.* Luke x. 28. This implies, that if he fully obeyed the law, he would certainly obtain life by it, according to the original deſign of that conſtitution. And when St. Paul ſays, That the ſalvation of ſinners was a thing which the law could not do, in that it was *weak through the fleſh*, Rom. vii. 3. it is implied, that it was not weak in itſelf, but fully ſufficient to give life; only, by the weakneſs of our fleſh, we were not able to obey it, and on this account it was not able to ſave us. This propoſition alſo is ſufficiently evident, that the law was firſt given to man in innocence, as a covenant of works, or as a conſtitution according to which he was to obtain life by his own works. I now proceed to the next propoſition, and to ſhew you,

III. That this law has paſſed through ſeveral editions, and received ſeveral additions and modifications, adapted to the various circumſtances of mankind, and the deſigns of heaven towards them.

That you may more fully underſtand this, I would obſerve by the way, that the law is either moral or poſitive. By the moral law, I mean that law which is founded upon the eternal reaſon of things, and that enjoins thoſe duties which creatures under ſuch and

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ſuch circumſtances owe to God, and to one another, and which neceſſarily flow from their relation to one another. Thus, love to God, and juſtice to mankind, are moral duties univerſally binding upon mankind in all circumſtances, whether in a ſtate of innocence, or in a ſtate of ſin; whether under the revealed law, or the law of nature. There can be no poſſible circumſtances in which mankind are free from the obligation of ſuch duties, and at liberty to commit the contrary ſins. Theſe are moſt properly the materials of a moral law. But there is another ſet of duties, agreeable to the circumſtances of fallen creatures under a diſpenſation of grace, which I may call evangelical morals; I mean repentance and reformation, and the utmoſt ſolicitude to re-obtain the forfeited favour of our Maker. Theſe are univerſally binding upon mankind in their preſent ſtate, and reſult from their circumſtances, and conſequently partake of the general nature of a moral law. By a poſitive law, I mean a law not neceſſarily reſulting from the reaſon of things, and our relations and circumſtances, but founded upon the will of the lawgiver, and adapted to ſome particular occaſion. Such was that appendage to the firſt covenant, "Thou ſhalt not eat of the tree of knowledge." Such were the inſtitution of ſacrifices immediately after the fall, the ordinance of circumciſion given to Abraham, and the various ceremonies of the law of Moſes; and ſuch are baptiſm and the Lord's ſupper, and the inſtitution of the firſt day of the week for the Chriſtian Sabbath under the goſpel. Theſe ordinances are not binding in their own nature, and conſequently they are not of univerſal and perpetual obligation, but they are in force when and where the lawgiver is pleaſed to appoint. And the moral law, under every diſpenſation, has had ſome of theſe inſtitutions annexed to it; though in the ſtate of innocence, and under the ſpiritual diſpenſation of the goſpel, they are but few and eaſy.

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I now reſume the propoſition, "That the law has paſſed through ſeveral editions, and received ſeveral additions and modifications." With regard to Adam in his original ſtate, it only required of him the duties naturally binding upon him, and adapted to his condition as an innocent creature, with this one poſitive precept added, that he ſhould not eat of the tree of knowledge. This was its model while a covenant of works. But when men fell, it received ſeveral additions and modifications adapted to his circumſtances and ſubſervient to the goſpel, the new plan of life, which was immediately introduced, as I ſhall have occaſion to obſerve more fully hereafter. Such was the early inſtitution of ſacrifices, to prefigure the grand atonement of Chriſt, which then took its riſe, and thence ſpread through all nations, though they ſoon forgot its original deſign and evangelical reference.—Thus the law continued for many hundreds of years, from Adam's fall to the Deluge.* After the Deluge it was given to Noah, with the inſtitution of ſacrifices continued, and the addition of ſome new laws, particularly the allowance of animal food, with the exception of blood. And it is this addition of the law that was moſt ſtrictly univerſal with regard to all mankind, who were the poſterity of Noah, the ſecond root of human nature, and who received it from him; though it was ſoon forgotten, or adulterated with ſuperſtitions. After ſome time, † when the knowledge and worſhip of the true God was almoſt loſt in the world, he was pleaſed to ſeparate Abraham from the idolatrous world, to ſet up his church in his family, and to continue the former edition of the law, with the addition of the ſacred rite of circumciſion, as a token of initiation into the church, and of the purification of the heart, and as a ſeal of the righteouſneſs of faith. And this conſtitution continued in the poſterity of A-

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* About 1656 years. *Univerſal Hiſt.* Vol. xx. p. 2.

† About 427 years, circumciſion was inſtituted 451 years after the deluge.

braham for about 430 years; when it was new-modelled and improved by a more full edition. A ſummary of the moral law was publiſhed with the utmoſt majeſty and terror on Mount Sinai, and written by God himſelf on two tables of ſtone. But beſides this moral law, and beſides the poſitive inſtitutions given to Adam, Noah and Abraham, God was pleaſed to add a great variety of poſitive laws, concerning the manner of ſacrificing, and the ſyſtem of worſhip, concerning ceremonial pollutions, concerning the Jewiſh policy, or civil government of that people, and many other things: of all which we have a full account in the law of Moſes.

This diſpenſation continued in force from that time for about 1525 years, till the aſcenſion of Chriſt, and the day of Pentecoſt, when the more glorious diſpenſation of the goſpel was introduced. It is often called the Law, by way of eminence; and it is to this moſt perfect diſpenſation of the law that the apoſtle particularly refers, when diſproving the poſſibility of a ſinner's juſtification by the law. And it was to his purpoſe to have this particularly in view: for if a ſinner could not be juſtified by this edition of the law, which was the moſt complete, and that in which the Jews peculiarly gloried and truſted, it is evident that he cannot be juſtified by the law at all, under any form whatſoever. Now, though the goſpel, or the covenant of grace, as I ſhall obſerve preſently, was interwoven with this diſpenſation, as well as every other, and it was the great deſign of the law to be ſubſervient to it, yet there was much of a covenant of works in this diſpenſation, and that in two reſpects. 1. In the dreadful majeſty and terror of the publication from amidſt the thunders and lightnings, and darkneſs of Sinai, which ſpread ſuch a horror through the whole camp of Iſrael, and made even Moſes confeſs, *I exceedingly fear and quake.* This had not the aſpect of friendſhip: it did not appear as if God was amicably converſing with an innocent people, and ſetting up a conſtitution

conſtitution of mere grace among them. It rather appeared like a diſpenſation of a provoked God towards a guilty people, intended to ſtrike terror into their impenitent hearts, to make them ſenſible of his awful majeſty and juſtice, of the terror of his law, and of their aggravated breaches of it. There were indeed gracious deſigns at the bottom of all this: but they were ſuch deſigns as could not be accompliſhed, till ſinners were made deeply ſenſible of their dreadful guilt, and the terrors of God and his holy law, which they had broken; and therefore to accompliſh them God puts on all theſe dreadful forms of wrath. Thus the Sinai diſpenſation was intended to prepare men for the method of ſalvation through Chriſt, by making them ſenſible of their miſerable condition by the breach of the covenant of works; and hence it had ſo much of the terrible aſpect of the covenant of works in its promulgation. This is one thing the apoſtle means, when he ſays, *the law worketh wrath*, Rom. iv. 15. that is, it is adapted to impreſs a ſenſe of divine wrath upon the minds of the guilty. Hence he calls that diſpenſation *the miniſtration of death and condemnation;* 2 Cor. iii. 7, 9. that is, it had a tendency to excite a ſenſe of death and condemnation; and he makes Hagar, the bond-woman, an allegorical repreſentation of this Sinai covenant, Gal. iv. 24, 25. becauſe it was calculated to excite in ſinners a ſpirit of bondage, or to ſtrike them with a ſenſe of ſlavery, terror and condemnation. This view alſo clears up the meaning of ſeveral things which he ſays of the Jewiſh law, as that *it was added becauſe of tranſgreſſion;* Gal. iii. 19. that is, it was annexed to the covenant of grace, becauſe it was neceſſary that ſinners ſhould be made deeply ſenſible of their guilt and condemnation by the breach of the law, in order to their ſeeking ſalvation in the way of grace through Chriſt. And hence, ſays he, *the law was our ſchoolmaſter, to bring us to Chriſt*, ver. 24. that is, the painful diſcipline and ſmarting rod of the law were neceſſary and conducive to conſtrain us to fly

to Chriſt as the only Saviour, without whom we were ſhut up under irreverſible condemnation. And again, Rom. v. 20. *the law entered, that the offence might abound;* that is, that it might appear that the offence had abounded, and overſpread the world; and therefore, that they ſtood in the utmoſt need of a Saviour.

Thus you ſee the diſpenſation of the law at Sinai had the appearance of a broken covenant of works, and in this view was ſubſervient to the goſpel. But this was not all; for, 2. If we conſider that covenant as the conſtitution of the Jewiſh church and ſtate, and the model by which they were to govern themſelves in the land of Canaan, it was properly a covenant of works. As a viſible national church and civil ſociety, God would reward or puniſh them in temporal things, according to and for their works. While they continued obedient to the external forms and inſtitutions of this law, they were to hold their poſſeſſions in the land of Canaan; and, when they publickly violated this covenant, they were caſt out of their poſſeſſions, and brought into ſlavery. Theſe temporal poſſeſſions they held upon the footing of a covenant of works; though ſuch of them as were good men were ſaved by a quite different conſtitution, even in the way of grace, and faith in Chriſt, as we are now; as I may have occaſion to obſerve hereafter.

This remark will explain ſuch places in the law and in the prophets, where we meet with ſuch declarations as this, *If a man obſerve my ſtatutes, he ſhall live in them;* of which you have more inſtances than one in the xviiith chapter of Ezekiel. They are ſaid to be "juſt," &c. as members of the Jewiſh church and ſtate, becauſe they had obſerved the externals of that law, which was the conſtitution of their republic, and which in that view only required an external obedience, which it was in their power to yield; and therefore they where entitled to life and its bleſſings, in the land of Canaan, according to that conſtitution. Indeed God ſeems to have governed not only the Jews, but

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all the kingdoms of the earth, conſidering them as civil ſocieties, very much in this manner, upon the footing of a covenant of works. Spiritual and immortal bleſſings are beſtowed upon individuals in every age in a way of grace, without regard to their perſonal works; and the holineſs neceſſary to the enjoyment of them is not merely outward, but in the whole ſoul; and it is God only that can work in them. But nations, as ſuch, are under a kind of covenant of works, the condition of which is an external obſervance of the laws of God, which is in their power, without any ſpecial aſſiſtance from him; and, as they perform or break this condition, temporal rewards and puniſhments are diſtributed to them by divine providence. This thought brings me in mind of thee, O Virginia! O my country! for if God deal with thee upon this plan, how dreadful muſt be thy doom!—But to return. This ſuggeſts to us another reaſon why the apoſtle ſo often ſpeaks of the Moſaic law as a covenant of works: namely, becauſe, conſidering it as the conſtitution of the Jewiſh republic in temporal reſpects, it was really ſuch, but it was never intended that the Jews ſhould ſeek or obtain ſpiritual or immortal bleſſings by it under this notion. I have been ſo much longer than I expected on this propoſition, that I muſt be the ſhorter on thoſe that follow. The next propoſition is,

IV. That the law of God requires perfect, perpetual and perſonal obedience. This holds true with regard to every law of God, whatever it be. If it requires purely moral duties, it requires that they be performed exactly according to its preſcriptions. If it requires evangelical duties, as repentance or ſincerity, it requires perfect repentance, perfect ſincerity. If it requires the obſervance of any ceremonial or ſacramental inſtitutions, as ſacrifice, circumciſion, baptiſm, or the Lord's ſupper, it requires a perfect obſervance of them. Men have got the notion into their heads of a divine law that does not require perfect obedience,

obedience, or that makes allowance for imperfection. But this is bad ſenſe, as well as bad divinity. It is the greateſt abſurdity imaginable; for to ſay that a law does not require perfect obedience, is the ſame thing as to ſay that it does not require what it does require: to do all that the law requires is perfect obedience: and ſince it requires us to do all that it does require, it certainly does require perfect obedience; and if it does not require perfect obedience, it does not require all that it does require; which is a direct contradiction. In ſhort, it is plain to common ſenſe that there never was, nor ever can be any law, moral or poſitive, divine or human, that does not require perfect, abſolute obedience. Farther, Is not every ſin forbidden? is not every duty enjoined? Undoubtedly it is: You are not at liberty to commit one ſin, or to omit one duty, not even the leaſt. Indeed the very notion of ſin and duty ſuppoſes a law forbidding the one, and enjoining the other; and they are juſt commenſurate with the prohibitions and injunctions of the law.— This is alſo the voice of ſcripture. That perfect obedience is required, appears from the dreadful curſe denounced upon every tranſgreſſor for the leaſt offence: *Curſed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them.* Gal. iii. 10. Not ſome ſubjects, but every one, of every rank and character, muſt not only reſolve or endeavour, but muſt do, not ſome things, or many things, but all things, written in the law; not for a time, or for the moſt part, but he muſt always continue to do them. And if he fail in one thing, in one moment of his exiſtence, the penalty of the law is in full force againſt him, and he falls under the curſe. His obedience muſt be univerſal, perpetual and uninterrupted. There is the ſame reaſon for his obeying all in all things, and at all times, as for his obeying in any thing, or at any time. And all this obedience the law requires of him in his own perſon: the law allows of no imputation of the righteouſneſs of another; no obedience

obedience by proxy or ſubſtitute: it is the covenant of grace alone that allows of this, and the law muſt be ſo far diſpenſed with, in order to make room for ſuch a conſtitution.

This, my brethren, is the nature of the law, of every law that God ever made, under every diſpenſation of religion, before the fall and after the fall, before the law of Moſes, under it, and under the goſpel. In all ages, in all circumſtances, and from all perſons it requires perfect, perpetual and perſonal obedience: to the performance of this, it promiſes eternal life: but the ſinner, by every the leaſt failure, falls under its dreadful curſe, and is cut off from all the promiſed bleſſings. And hence it moſt evidently follows,

V. That it is abſolutely impoſſible for any of the fallen ſons of men to be juſtified and ſaved by the conſtitution of the law. Take what diſpenſation of the law you pleaſe, the law of innocence, the law of Moſes, or the moral part of the goſpel, it is impoſſible for one of the fallen poſterity of Adam to be ſaved by it in any of theſe views; and the reaſon is plain, there is not one of them but what has broken it; there is not one of them that has yielded perfect obedience to it; and therefore, there is not one of them but what is condemned by it to ſuffer its dreadful penalty. This is ſo extremely plain from what has been ſaid, that I need not inſiſt upon the proof of it. I ſhall only ſubjoin the repeated declaration of the apoſtle, that *by the deeds of the law, no fleſh can be juſtified*, Rom. iii. 20. Gal. ii. 16. and that *as many as are of the works of the law, are under the curſe.* Gal. iii. 10. Come, *ye that deſire to be under the law, do you not hear the law?* Gal. iv. 2. Hark! how the thunders of Sinai roar againſt you as guilty ſinners. Can you pretend that you have always perfectly obeyed the law? that you have never committed one ſin, or neglected one duty? Alas! you muſt hang down the head, and cry Guilty, guilty; for in many things you have all offended. Then, be it known unto you, there is no life by the law for you.

Set

Set about obedience with ever ſo much earneſtneſs; repent till you ſhed rivers of tears; faſt, till you have reduced yourſelves to ſkeletons; alas! all this will not do, if you expect life by your own obedience to the law: for all this is not that perfect obedience which it abſolutely requires of all the ſons of men; and whatever is ſhort of this is nothing, and leaves you under its curſe. You may make excuſes to men, and to your own conſciences, but the law will admit of none. Perfect obedience! perfect obedience! is its eternal cry, and till you can produce that, it condemns you to everlaſting miſery, and all your cries, and tears, and reformation are to no purpoſe. Thus you are held in cloſe cuſtody by the law; you are ſhut up under condemnation by it. And is there no way of eſcape? No; there is no poſſible way of eſcape—but one: and that ſhall be the matter of the next propoſition.

VI. That God has made another conſtitution, namely, the goſpel, or the covenant of grace, by which even guilty ſinners, condemned by the law, may be juſtified and ſaved by faith, through the righteouſneſs of Jeſus Chriſt.

According to this conſtitution there is encouragement for ſinners to repent, and uſe the means of grace; and all who are ſaved by it, are not only obliged to yield obedience to the law, but alſo enabled to do ſo with ſincerity, though not to perfection. They are effectually taught by it *to deny ungodlineſs and worldly luſts, and to live righteouſly, ſoberly and godly in the world;* and in ſhort, holineſs of heart and life is as effectually ſecured in this way as in any other. But then, here lies the difference; that all our obedience to the law, all our endeavours, all our repentance, prayers, and reformation; in ſhort, all our good works, all our virtues and graces are not at all the ground of our juſtification; they do not, in whole or in part, more or leſs conſtitute our juſtifying righteouſneſs; ſo that in juſtification we are conſidered as guilty, law-condemned ſinners, entirely deſtitute of all perſonal righteouſneſs;

neſs; and we are pardoned and accepted, only and entirely upon account of the righteouſneſs of Jeſus Chriſt, imputed to us, and accepted of God for us, as though it were our own. I ſay, the righteouſneſs of Jeſus Chriſt, or his yielding the moſt perfect obedience to the precept of the law, and ſuffering its dreadful penalty for us, or in our ſtead, is the only ground of our juſtification. This is a righteouſneſs as perfect as the law of God requires. And conſequently the law is not repealed when we are juſtified in this way; it is ſtill in full force; and all its demands are anſwered by this righteouſneſs, which is equal to the ſevereſt requiſitions of the covenant of works; only it is diſpenſed with in one particular; namely, that whereas the law properly requires perſonal obedience from every man for himſelf, now it accepts of the obedience of Chriſt as a ſurety in our ſtead, and it is ſatisfied by his righteouſneſs imputed to us, as though it were originally our own. But how do we obtain an intereſt in this righteouſneſs? I anſwer, It is only obtained by a vigorous purſuit, and in the earneſt uſe of the means of grace; but then all theſe endeavours of ours do not in the leaſt entitle us to it, or it is not at all beſtowed upon us on account of theſe endeavours; but the grand prerequiſite, and that which has a peculiar concurrence in obtaining it, is an humble faith; that is, when a ſinner, deeply ſenſible of his guilt, of his condemnation by the law, and of his own utter inability to do any thing at all for his own juſtification; I ſay, when ſuch an humble ſinner deſpairing of relief from himſelf, renounces all his own righteouſneſs, and truſts only and entirely in the free grace of God in Jeſus Chriſt, when he places all his dependance upon his righteouſneſs only, and moſt earneſtly deſires that God would deal with him entirely upon that footing, then he believes; and then, and thus, this righteouſneſs is made over to him, and accepted for him, and God no more views him as a law-condemned ſinner, but as one that has a righteouſneſs equal to all the demands of the law, and

therefore

therefore he deals with him accordingly: he pronounces him juſt, and gives him a title to life and every bleſſing, as though he deſerved it upon his own account, or had a claim to it upon the footing of his own obedience to the covenant of works.

My brethren, I am bold to pronounce this the goſpel-method of ſalvation; and, whatever ſcepticiſm and uncertainty I feel about many other things, I have not the leaſt ſcruple to venture my ſoul, with all its guilt, and with all its immortal intereſts upon this plan. If I have thoroughly ſearched the ſcriptures for myſelf in any one point, it is in this. And could I but lay before you all the evidence which has occurred to me in the ſearch, I cannot but perſuade myſelf it would be fully ſatisfactory to you all; but at preſent I can only point out to you a few paſſages: Acts xiii. 39. *By Jeſus Chriſt*, ſays St. Paul, *all that believe are juſtified from all things, from which they could not be juſtified by the law of Moſes*, which was the moſt complete diſpenſation of the law. Rom. iii. 21—28. *Now the righteouſneſs of God without the law* (that is, the righteouſneſs which does not at all conſiſt in the works of the law, but is quite a different thing from it *) *is manifeſted—even the righteouſneſs of God, which is by the faith of Chriſt.* This, you ſee is the way in which it comes *unto all and upon all them that believe; for there is no difference* of Jew or Gentile here; all *being freely juſtified by his grace, through the redemption that is in Chriſt.* Therefore we conclude, that *a man is juſtified by faith, without the deeds of the law:* ſo Rom. iv. *To him that worketh*, and on that account is conſidered as righteous, *the reward is reckoned not of grace, but of debt:* he is not at all dealt with in the goſpel-method, which is entirely a plan of grace (ver. 4.) *but to him that worketh not*, with a view to his juſtification, and is not conſidered as entitled to it upon the account of his works, *but believeth*, humbly truſteth, and dependeth *upon him that juſtifieth the ungodly*, upon him who conſiders the ſinner,

* *Choris nomou dikaioſune.*

ſinner, whatever previous endeavours he may have uſed, as ungodly, and deſtitute of all perſonal righteouſneſs, to ſuch an humble believer, *his faith is counted for righteouſneſs.* (ver. 5.) *Even as David deſcribeth the bleſſedneſs of that man, to whom the Lord imputeth righteouſneſs without works,* &c. (ver. 6.) Gal. ii. 15. *We,* ſays St. Paul, *who are Jews by nature* (and therefore ſtand moſt fair for juſtification by the law, if it were poſſible) *and not ſinners of the Gentiles, knowing that a man is not juſtified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Chriſt, even we have believed in Jeſus Chriſt, that we might be juſtified by the faith of Chriſt; for by the works of the law ſhall no fleſh be juſtified.* (ver. 16.) Theſe, my brethren, are but ſpecimens of the many plain and expreſs ſcriptures that ſupport this doctrine; and I think it plain, upon the whole, that if we can underſtand any thing contained in that ſacred book, we may ſafely conclude that this truth is contained in it.

Here I would hint, what I intended to enlarge upon, had the time allowed, that this is the only way in which any of the ſons of Adam have been ſaved ſince the fall; and that this gracious ſcheme has run thro' all the diſpenſations of religion, from Adam to Noah, from Noah to Abraham, from Abraham to Moſes, and from Moſes to Chriſt; and that now, by the goſpel, it is more fully and illuſtriouſly revealed, the object of a more diſtinct, particular, and explicit faith. Rom. i. 17. It was firſt publiſhed immediately after the firſt breach of the covenant of works, in that gracious promiſe, *The ſeed of the woman ſhall break the ſerpent's head.* Gen. iii. 15. It was communicated to Abraham in that promiſe, *In thy ſeed;* that is, as St. Paul teaches us to underſtand it, *in Chriſt,* who ſhall ſpring from thee according to the fleſh, *ſhall all the nations of the earth be bleſſed.* Gen. xxii. 18. Gal. iii. 16. Hence St. Paul tells us, that the ſcripture, *foreſeeing that God would juſtify the Heathen through faith, preached the goſpel before-hand to Abraham.* Gal. iii. 8. This was, as it were, the ſubſtratum of all the ceremonies and inſti-

tutions of the law of Moſes; and, as was obſerved, the whole of this law, and the ſolemn and dreadful manner of its publication, were intended to ſubſerve this ſcheme, by making men ſenſible of their need of it, and conſtraining them to fly to it for refuge. The prophets alſo received this evangelical light, and continued to diffuſe it around them, till the Sun of Righteouſneſs aroſe. But all theſe diſcoveries were but dark, when compared to the clearer revelation we have of it in the New Teſtament, particularly in the epiſtles to the Romans and Galatians, which deſignedly treat upon it. However, they that lived under former diſpenſations, had light enough to direct them to place their truſt in the mercy of God, and to look out with eager eyes for the Meſſiah, through whom alone they were juſtified, though they might not have diſtinct ideas of the way. Hence Abraham and David are mentioned by St. Paul as inſtances of the goſpel-method of juſtification by faith in Chriſt. Rom. iv. 1—7. I now proceed to another propoſition.

VII. That all mankind are under the law, as a covenant of works, till they willingly forſake it, and fly to the goſpel for refuge by faith in Chriſt.

There are but two conſtitutions that God has ſet up in our world, by which mankind can obtain life, namely, the covenant of works and the covenant of grace, or the law and goſpel: and all mankind are under the one, or the other. They are all either under the conſtitution which demands perfect obedience as the only title to life, and threatens death, eternal death, to the leaſt failure; or under that which does indeed both require and enable them to yield ſincere obedience, but does not inſiſt upon our obedience at all as the ground of our acceptance and juſtification, but confers that honour entirely upon the complete righteouſneſs of Jeſus Chriſt, received by the humble faith of a guilty, ſelf-condemned, helpleſs, broken-hearted ſinner. We are all of us, my brethren, under one or other of theſe conſtitutions; for to be from

under

under both of them is the ſame thing as to be lawleſs, and to be under no plan of life at all. Now, we are under the law while we are under the government of a legal ſpirit; and we cannot be freed from it till we are brought off from all dependance upon the law, and conſtrained to chooſe the goſpel-method of ſalvation as helpleſs, law-condemned ſinners by our own perſonal act. We live under the goſpel-diſpenſation indeed, and were never under the law of Moſes: and yet we may be under the law notwithſtanding, as the Romans and Galatians were till they were ſet free by faith, though they had been heathens, and were never under the Moſaic diſpenſation. An outward diſpenſation is not the thing that makes the difference in this caſe. Many who lived under the diſpenſation of the law had an evangelical ſpirit, or faith in Chriſt, and therefore they were upon the goſpel-plan, and obtained ſalvation in the way of grace. And multitudes that live in the New Teſtament age, under the goſpel adminiſtration of the covenant of grace, and who profeſs the chriſtian religion, and were never ſubject to the law of Moſes, are under the influence of a legal, ſelf-righteous ſpirit, and therefore are not under grace, but under the law as a covenant of works: upon this footing they ſtand before God, and they can enter no claim to life upon any other plan. As for the righteouſneſs of Chriſt, and the grace of the goſpel, they have nothing to do with it, becauſe they have not choſen it, and made it theirs by their own perſonal act.

And would you know whether you are ſet free from the law, and placed under the covenant of grace? St. Paul, who knew it, both by his own experience and by inſpiration from heaven, will inform you, (r) You have been made deeply ſenſible of ſin and condemnation by the law. *By the law is the knowledge of ſin.* Rom. iii. 20. I had not known ſin *but by the law*, ſays St. Paul, perſonating a convinced ſinner under the law, *without the law*, Rom. viii. 7. that is, while I was ignorant of the extent and ſpirituality of the law, *ſin was*

was dead, as to my sense and apprehension of it; *but when the commandment came*, with power and conviction to my conscience, *sin revived, and I died;* that is, I saw sin to be alive in me, and myself to be dead, dead in trespasses and sins, and condemned to death by the law, verse 9. *the law also worketh wrath;* that is, a sense of the wrath of God, and the dreadful punishment of sin; Rom. iv. 14. And has the law ever had these effects upon you, my brethren? Have you ever had such a conviction of sin, and condemnation by it? If not, you are still under it. (2) If you have been delivered from the law, you have been cut off from all hopes of obtaining justification by your own obedience to it; you have given up this point as altogether desperate; or in the strong language of the apostle, you have been slain by the law. *When the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.* Rom. viii. 9. *My brethren*, says the apostle to the christians at Rome, *ye are become dead to the law*, verse 4. that is, ye are become dead to all endeavours, all hopes and desires of justification by the works of the law; you see nothing but death for you in that constitution. And he tells you how this death was brought about; *I through the law am dead to the law*, Gal. ii. 19. that is, the law itself became the executioner of all my hopes of life by it, and for ever put an end to all my endeavours to seek justification in that way: it was a view of the extensive demands of the law that discovered to me my own inability to comply with them, and so deadened me entirely to all expectations of life by my obedience to it.

And have you ever, my brethren, been thus slain by the law to the law? Have you ever been made deeply sensible of the absolute impossibility of working out a justifying righteousness for yourselves by your own endeavours, and thereupon given up the point, as hopeless and desperate? If not, you are still under the law, and your hearts eagerly cling to it, and will not be divorced from it. Here you will hold

and

and hang, till you drop into the bottomleſs pit, unleſs God deliver you from this legal ſpirit.

(3.) If you have been ſet at liberty from the law, and brought under the covenant of grace, you have believed in Chriſt, and fled to the goſpel, as the only way of eſcape from the bondage and condemnation of the law. It is the uniform doctrine of the apoſtle, that it is by faith only that this happy change is brought about in our condition. *We have believed in Jeſus Chriſt, that we might be juſtified by the faith of Chriſt, and not by the works of the law.* Gal. ii. 16. But after faith is come, we are ſet at liberty, and no longer under the law, *as a ſchoolmaſter.* Gal. iv. 25. *Righteouſneſs ſhall be imputed to us alſo, if we believe in him that raiſeth up our Lord Jeſus from the dead.* Rom. iv. 24. Faith, you ſee, is the turning point. And ſo it is repreſented by Chriſt himſelf. *He that believeth in Him is not condemned: but he that believeth not, is condemned already,* John iii. 18. he has ſinned, and therefore the ſentence of condemnation is already paſſed upon him by the law. And have you, my brethren, ever been brought thus to believe? Have you found yourſelves ſhut up to the faith, as the only way of eſcape? and have you fled to the mercy of God in Chriſt in that way, with all the vigour of your ſouls?

(4.) If you are under the covenant of grace, then you are not willing ſlaves to ſin, but make it your great buſineſs to live to God. This is repreſented as the privilege and conſtant endeavour of all that are delivered from the law. *Sin ſhall not have dominion over you, for ye are under the law,* which requires obedience, but furniſhes no ſtrength to perform it, *but under grace,* which will enable you to reſiſt ſin, and live to God. Rom. vi. 14. *Ye are dead to the law, that ye might be married to another, even to him that is raiſed from the dead, that you might bring forth fruit unto God:* This is the great deſign of your divorce from the law, and your marriage to Chriſt; Rom. vii. 4. *I through the law, am dead to the law, that I might live unto God.* Gal. ii. 19.

ii. 19. And do you thus live to God, ſirs? Is this the great buſineſs, and conſtant endeavour of your whole life? If not, you are not under grace, but under the law, the Egyptian taſk-maſter, who demands perfect obedience, but gives no ability to perform it; and now, you that are under the law, take a ſerious view of your condition. *They that are of faith are bleſſed*, Gal. vi. 9. but faith has never entered your hearts, and therefore you have nothing to do with the bleſſing. But you may read your doom in the next verſe: *As many as are of the works of the law, are under the curſe* (verſe 10.) for, *curſed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them.* Thus you lie under the miniſtration of death and condemnation, and you can never get free from its curſe till you can perform impoſſibilities; till you can annihilate all your paſt ſins, till you can transform your ſinful life into an uninterrupted courſe of perfect obedience. Do this, and you ſhall live, even according to that conſtitution under which you are. But till you can do this, till you can yield perfect, perpetual obedience, in your own perſons, you can never get free from the curſe, or obtain life, while you affect this way of juſtification. I tell you again, all your prayers and tears, all your repentance and reformation; in ſhort, every thing that comes ſhort of perfect obedience, will avail you nothing at all upon this conſtitution: they are but fig-leaves that cannot hide your nakedneſs. And do not imagine that the righteouſneſs of Chriſt will ſupply your defects, and procure you acceptance; for his righteouſneſs belongs only to the covenant of grace, and is imputed only to ſuch as have received it by faith; but, while you are under the law, you have nothing to do with it. St. Paul himſelf will tell you, *Chriſt is become of no effect unto you, whoſoever of you would be juſtified by the law; ye are fallen from grace*, Gal. v. 4. you ſtand entirely on your own bottom; and God will deal with you juſt as he finds you in yourſelves, without any relation to Chriſt at all.

And

And now, my dear brethren, do you not begin to find yourſelves pinched cloſely, and in a ſore ſtrait? Do you not feel yourſelves impriſoned and ſhut up under the law? And are not you caſting about, and looking out for ſome way of eſcape? Well, I will ſhew you the only way left, and that is by faith in the righteouſneſs of Jeſus Chriſt. The goſpel! the goſpel! O that my voice could publiſh the joyful ſound in every corner of this globe inhabited by guilty ſinners! The goſpel of grace is the only relief for you. Fly thither, ye helpleſs, law-condemned, ſelf-condemned ſinners; fly thither, and you are ſafe. As depraved and guilty, as ungodly and deſtitute of all righteouſneſs, accept of the righteouſneſs of Jeſus Chriſt. Caſt all your dependance upon it, and make it the only ground of all your hopes. Regard the law always as a rule of life, and labour to form your practice upon that ſacred model; but as a covenant of works, by which you ſhould obtain life, fly from it, abandon it, give up all your hopes and expectations from it; and betake yourſelves to the covenant of grace, of pure, free, unmingled grace, without the leaſt ingredient of merit. In this way, I offer you pardon, juſtification, and eternal ſalvation; and ſuch of you as have choſen this way may be aſſured of theſe bleſſings, notwithſtanding all your ſins and imperfections. O! that this repreſentation of your condition may recommend Jeſus Chriſt and his righteouſneſs to you! O! that it may effectually draw off ſinners from all their vain, ſelf-righteous ſchemes, which, like cobwebs, they would form out of their own bowels, and conſtrain them to ſtoop and ſubmit to the righteouſneſs of God, and the method of grace! If, after all, they refuſe, they will leave this houſe condemned and under the curſe. But ſuch of you as comply, like the penitent publican, you will return to your own houſe juſtified, however guilty you came here this morning. I ſhall conclude with a ſtanza or two from that evangelical writer, Dr. Watts:

Go

Go, ye that reſt upon the law,
And toil, and ſeek ſalvation there;
Look to the flames that Moſes ſaw,
And ſhrink, and tremble, and deſpair:
But I'll retire beneath the Croſs:
Jeſus, at thy dear feet I lie;
And the keen ſword that juſtice draws,
Flaming and red ſhall paſs me by.

SERMON LV.

THE GOSPEL-INVITATION.

[A SACRAMENTAL DISCOURSE.]

LUKE xiv. 21—24. *Then the maſter of the houſe being angry, ſaid to his ſervant, Go out quickly into the ſtreets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind. And the ſervant ſaid, Lord it is done as thou haſt commanded, and yet there is room. And the Lord ſaid unto the ſervant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my houſe may be filled. For I ſay unto you, that none of thoſe men that were bidden, ſhall taſte of my ſupper.*

SO vaſt and various are the bleſſings propoſed to our acceptance in the goſpel, that they can never be fully repreſented, though the utmoſt force of language be exhauſted for that purpoſe in the ſacred writings. Among other lively images, this is one in my context, where the goſpel is compared to a feaſt, a marriage-feaſt, of royal magnificence. The propriety and ſignificancy of this repreſentation are obvious at firſt

firſt ſight; for what is more rich and elegant, and what more agreeable to mankind, than ſuch an entertainment!

Though it is my principal deſign to conſider this parable in its general ſecondary ſenſe, as applicable to the evangelized world, yet I ſhall hint a few words upon its particular primary ſenſe, as immediately applicable to the Jews at the time when it was ſpoken.

Jeſus was ready to improve every occurrence for profitable converſation; and when one of the gueſts made this remark, *Bleſſed is he that ſhall eat bread in the kingdom of God*, or in the reign of the Meſſiah; he takes occaſion to let him and the reſt of the company know, that the kingdom of God under the Meſſiah would not be ſo acceptable to the world, particularly to the Jews, as might be expected; but that they would generally reject it, though they pretended ſo eagerly to expect and deſire it.

He ſaid unto him, A certain man made a great ſupper; that is, the great God has made rich proviſions through Jeſus Chriſt of all bleſſings neceſſary for the complete ſalvation and happineſs of a guilty world: *and he bade many*; that is, he invited the whole nation of the Jews to a participation of theſe bleſſings, when they ſhould be revealed; invited them beforehand, by Moſes and the prophets, and by John the Baptiſt. *And he ſent his ſervant at ſupper-time*; that is, he ſent Chriſt and his apoſtles, when the goſpel-diſpenſation was introduced, and thoſe bleſſings fully revealed, *to ſay to them that were bidden*, that is, to the Jews, who had been invited by his former meſſengers; alluding to the cuſtom of thoſe times, when, beſides the general invitation to nuptial entertainments given ſome time before, it was uſual to ſend a particular invitation when the feaſt was ready, and the attendance of the gueſts was immediately expected; *Come, for all things are now ready*. Embrace the long expected Meſſiah, who has now made his appearance among you, and accept the bleſſings he offers you now, when they are fully re-

vealed.—*But they all, with one consent, began to make excuse;* that is, the Jews in general rejected the Messiah, and the blessings he proposed to their acceptance. The true reason was, their natural aversion to one that taught so holy a religion, and proposed only a spiritual deliverance. But they cover over their conduct with plausible excuses; as if the guests invited to a banquet should say, *I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it:* or, *I have bought five yoke of oxen, and go to prove them:* or, *I have married a wife, and cannot come; therefore pray excuse me.* These excuses, you see, are all drawn from the affairs of this life; which perhaps was intended to intimate, that the pleasures and cares of this world are the reason why the Jews and sinners in all ages reject the invitations of the gospel. It is also observable, that the excuses here made are very trifling and not plausible. What necessity for viewing a piece of ground, or proving oxen, after the purchase? That ought to have been done before the purchase. Could a man's being newly married be a reason against his going with his bride to a place of feasting and pleasure? No; these excuses are silly and impertinent; and Christ may have represented them in this light on purpose, to intimate, that all the objections and excuses which sinners plead for their non-compliance with the gospel, are trifling, and not so much as plausible.

Then the master of the house being angry; that is, "the great God resenting the obstinate infidelity of the Jews, and determining to reject them for it, said to his servant;" that is, gave the commission to his apostles, *Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city,* where beggars sit to ask charity, *and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind.* Perhaps this may refer to the sending of the gospel to the Jews that were dispersed in heathen countries and their proselytes, when their countrymen in the Holy Land had rejected it. They were not in the highways and hedges, like the poor Gentiles, nor yet settled

tled in the houſes in Jeruſalem, but are very properly repreſented as beggars in the ſtreets and alleys of the city; not in ſuch abandoned circumſtances as the Gentiles, nor yet ſo advantageouſly ſituated as the Jews in their own land, under the immediate miniſtry of the apoſtles. The firſt invitation is repreſented as given to perſons of faſhion, to intimate the ſuperior advantages of the Jews reſident in Judea, to whom the goſpel was firſt preached. And thoſe diſperſed among the Gentiles are repreſented as lying in the ſtreets and lanes, as poor, maimed, halt, and blind beggars, to ſignify their miſerable condition in common with all mankind, without the bleſſings of the goſpel; and their diſadvantageous ſituation, compared with the Jews in and about Jeruſalem. Or perhaps ſending the invitation to thoſe poor creatures, when they firſt had rejected it, may ſignify the firſt preaching of the goſpel to the Gentiles, upon the Jews rejecting it. And then the ſervant being ordered to go out again, not into the ſtreets and lanes of the city, as before, but into the highways and hedges, may ſignify the farther preaching of the goſpel among the Gentiles, who were far off from the church, the city of God, and like poor country-beggars, lying as outcaſts upon the public roads. But if we underſtand the former paſſage in the firſt ſenſe, as ſignifying the publication of the goſpel to the Jews diſperſed among the Gentiles, and to their proſelytes, then this ſecond miſſion of the ſervant muſt ſignify the ſending of the goſpel for the firſt time to the Gentiles, after both the Jews reſident in their own country, and thoſe ſcattered in other nations had rejected it. The parable concludes with a terrible denunciation againſt thoſe who had refuſed the invitation: *None of thoſe men that were bidden, ſhall taſte of my ſupper*; that is, "The infidel Jews, though firſt invited, ſhall never enjoy the bleſſings of the goſpel; but my church ſhall be furniſhed with members from among the poor outcaſt heathens, rather than ſuch ſhould continue in it."

Theſe

Theſe things muſt ſuffice to ſhew you the primary meaning of this parable, as applicable to the Jews of that age; and the reception of the Gentiles into the church in their ſtead. But I intend to conſider it in a more extenſive ſenſe, as applicable to us in theſe latter times.

Before I enter upon the conſideration of this paſſage, it is neceſſary I ſhould clear up an inquiry or two, which may reflect light upon the whole.

What are thoſe bleſſings of the goſpel which are here repreſented by a marriage-feaſt? And, What is meant by the duty here repreſented by a compliance with an invitation to ſuch a feaſt?

The bleſſings here repreſented by a marriage-feaſt, are infinitely rich and numerous. Pardon of ſin; a free and full pardon for thouſands, millions of the moſt aggravated ſins: the influences of the Holy Spirit to ſanctify our depraved natures, to ſubdue our ſins, and implant and cheriſh in our hearts every grace and virtue: freedom from the tyranny of ſin and ſatan, and favourable acceſs to the bleſſed God, and ſweet communion with him, through Jeſus Chriſt, even in this world: the reviving communications of divine love, to ſweeten the afflictions of life; and the conſtant aſſiſtance of divine grace to bear us up under every burden, and to enable us to perſevere in the midſt of many temptations to apoſtacy; deliverance from hell, and all the conſequences of ſin; and a title to heaven, and all its inconceivable joys: in ſhort, complete ſalvation in due time, and everlaſting happineſs, equal to the largeſt capacities of our nature.— This is a ſhort view of the bleſſings of the goſpel. But the riches of Chriſt are unſearchable; and human language can never repreſent them fully to view. But from the little that we know of them, do they not appear perfectly ſuited to our neceſſities; and ſuch as we would aſk of God, ſhould he give us leavē to aſk what we pleaſe?

Theſe

Theſe bleſſings are repreſented to us in a ſtriking and ſenſible manner in the Lord's Supper; and hence you ſee with what propriety it is called a feaſt. It is a rich entertainment for hungry ſouls; and the bleſſings which it ſignifies, and the conveyance of which it ſeals to believers, ſatisfy the moſt eager deſires, and fully ſupport and cheriſh the ſpiritual life. This, indeed, is not the feaſt primarily intended in this parable; for the Lord's Supper was not inſtituted when this parable was ſpoken; yet moſt of the things contained in it may very properly be accommodated to this ordinance.

You ſee the feaſt to which we are invited, namely, the rich bleſſings of the goſpel. And now, let us inquire, What is meant by the duty here repreſented by a compliance with an invitation to a marriage-feaſt?

It ſuppoſes a deep affecting ſenſe of our want of theſe bleſſings, and of our periſhing condition without them: It ſuppoſes eager deſires after them, and vigorous endeavours to obtain them: It ſuppoſes a willingneſs to abandon every thing inconſiſtent with them; and it implies a cordial willingneſs to accept of them as they were offered; for to pretend to be willing to receive them, and yet refuſe the terms upon which they are offered, is the greateſt abſurdity. And how are they offered? They are offered freely; and therefore freely we muſt receive them, if we receive them at all.—We muſt not offer our own imaginary merit to purchaſe them; but take them as free gifts to us, purchaſed entirely by the righteouſneſs of Jeſus Chriſt. They are offered conjunctly; that is, in an inſeparable conjunction with one another. Pardon and ſanctifying grace, holineſs and happineſs, deliverance from the power, the pleaſures, and the profits of ſin, as well as from hell and the puniſhments of ſin, the croſs and the crown, ſelf-denial and the moſt noble ſelf-poſſeſſion, are propoſed to our choice in conjunction, and they cannot be ſeparated; and, therefore, in conjunction we muſt receive them, or not at all: we muſt receive

receive them all or none. To accept the pardon, and reject ſanctifying grace; to accept the rewards, and refuſe the work of holineſs; to accept deliverance from the puniſhment of ſin, and yet refuſe deliverance from ſin itſelf, as though it were a painful confinement, or bereavement; to accept of Chriſt as our Saviour, and reject him as our ruler, this is the wildeſt abſurdity, and an abſolute impoſſibility. To pretend to accept God's offer, and in the mean time to make our own terms, is to inſult and mock him. What God and the nature of things have joined, let not man put aſunder.

Hence you may ſee, that the duty repreſented by complying with an invitation to a marriage-feaſt in this parable, implies our embracing the goſpel as true, which is oppoſed to the unbelief of the Jews; our accepting the bleſſings of the goſpel freely, as the gracious gift of God for the ſake of Chriſt, renouncing all our own imaginary merit; and our voluntary dedication of ourſelves to the ſervice of God, or conſenting to be holy in heart and in all manner of converſation. Whoever complies with the invitations of the goſpel in this manner, ſhall be admitted to the marriage-ſupper of the Lamb at the conſummation of all things, and be happy for ever.

Now, I hope, you will know what I mean, when, in the progreſs of this diſcourſe, I ſhall exhort you, in the language of my text, to come in to this feaſt, or to comply with the invitation: I mean, that you ſhould freely and heartily accept of the bleſſings of the goſpel, as they are offered to you by the bleſſed God, who alone has a right to appoint the terms.

After theſe preliminaries, I proceed to the immediate conſideration of my text.

The firſt thing that occurs, is a lively repreſentation of the wretched ſtate of mankind, previous to their being enriched with the bleſſings of the goſpel. They are *poor, and maimed, and halt, and blind*, lying as beggars and outcaſts in the ſtreets and lanes of the city, and

and by the highways and hedges in the country. What can repreſent a more pitiable condition, with regard to this world! To be poor, maimed, halt and blind, in a palace, in the midſt of all the neceſſaries and comforts of life, is a moſt melancholy ſituation; but to be poor, maimed, halt and blind, in the ſtreets and lanes, or ſcattered about in the highways and hedges, as forlorn outcaſts, without any covering but the inclement ſky, without any bed but the cold ground, without any ſuſtenance but the charity of paſſengers; this is the moſt melancholy ſituation that can be imagined: and this is the ſituation in which all mankind are repreſented, with regard to the eternal world, by one that perfectly knew their caſe, and who could not but give the moſt impartial account of it. This is your condition, my brethren, till you accept the rich bleſſings of the goſpel. You are poor, poor as the moſt helpleſs beggar on the highway; deſtitute of pardon; deſtitute of all real goodneſs in the ſight of God, whatever ſplendid appearance of virtue you may have in the ſight of men; deſtitute of all qualifications for heaven, as well as of a title to it; deſtitute of all happineſs ſuited to the ſpiritual nature, immortal duration, and large capacities of your ſouls; deſtitute of the favour of God, which is better than life, and without which life itſelf will be a curſe; deſtitute of an intereſt in the righteouſneſs and interceſſion of Chriſt the only Saviour of ſinners; deſtitute of the ſanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit, who alone can make you truly holy. And what a poor deſtitute condition is this! You are maimed and defective, in a moral ſenſe; defective in thoſe graces and virtues which are eſſential members of the new man. Your ſouls are incomplete unfiniſhed things. Your underſtandings without divine knowledge; your wills without a divine bias towards God and holineſs; your affections without a proper tendency towards ſuitable objects: and theſe are as monſtrous defects in a moral ſenſe, as a body without limbs, or a head without eyes in a

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natural ſenſe. You are halt or lame; without power of ſpiritual motion, or tendency towards it; without ſtrength or inclination to walk in the way of God's commandments. You are blind as to ſpiritual and eternal things; that is, ignorant of the glory of God, and the excellency of Jeſus Chriſt, and the way of ſalvation through him; ignorant of the evil and deformity of ſin; and blind to the beauties of holineſs. You may indeed have fine ſpeculative notions about theſe things; but your notions are faint and unaffecting, and have no proper influence upon your heart and practice, and therefore as to all the uſeful and practical purpoſes of knowledge, you are ſtupidly blind and ignorant. O! what an affecting, miſerable ſituation is this! and what renders it ſtill the worſe, is that you are not ſenſible of it. The poor, blind, impotent beggar in the ſtreets, or on the high road, is ſenſible of his condition, longs for deliverance, and begs and cries for relief from day to day. But alas! you are *rich and increaſed with goods, and have need of nothing*, in your own imagination; when you are *wretched and miſerable, and poor, and blind, and naked.* And hence you are ſo far from crying importunately for relief, like blind Bartimeus by the way-ſide, *Jeſus, thou ſon of David, have mercy on me!* that you will not accept relief when it is freely offered to you.

And are not you very unlikely gueſts to furniſh out a nuptial feaſt? May not the great God juſtly leave you out in the invitation of the goſpel, and refuſe you the offer of its invaluable bleſſings? But O! the aſtoniſhing condeſcenſion and grace! to you is the word of ſalvation ſent. Hear the commiſſion firſt given to the apoſtles, and ſtill continued to miniſters of the goſpel of a lower rank, *Go out—go out quickly*, the caſe is too dangerous to admit of delay. Without immediate proviſion the poor outcaſts will periſh, therefore make haſte to find them out wherever they lie, and think it no hardſhip or idignity to you to go to the meaneſt places in queſt of them. Go through the ſtreets

ſtreets and alleys of the city, and ſearch the hedges and highways in the country; *and bring them in;* urge them to come; inſiſt upon their compliance; take no denial. Bring them in hither—hither, into the arms of my favour;—hither, into my church, the grand apartment appointed for the celebration of this magnificent entertainment;—hither, into the ſociety of the moſt honourable gueſts, and into a participation of the richeſt bleſſings. Bring them in hither, poor, and blind, and lame, and halt, and maimed, as they are. They are all welcome. *Him that cometh unto me,* though clothed in rags, and deſtitute of all things, *I will in nowiſe caſt out.*

To diſcharge this benevolent commiſſion, I appear among you this day; and ſhall I find none among you that will comply with the invitation? Where are the poor, the maimed, the halt, and the blind? In queſt of you I am ſent; and I am ordered to bring you in. And will ye refuſe? Come, ye poor! accept the unſearchable riches of Chriſt. Come, ye blind! admit the healing light of the Sun of Righteouſneſs. Ye halt and maimed! ſubmit yourſelves to Him, who, as a Phyſician, can heal what is diſordered, and as a Creator, can add what is wanting. Come, ye hungry, ſtarving ſouls! come to this feaſt of fat things; that is (to ſpeak without a metaphor) accept the bleſſings of the goſpel now freely offered to you. *Ho! every one that thirſteth, come ye to the waters; and him that hath no money, come, buy wine and milk, without money, and without price.* Will ye rather ſit ſtill in the ſtreets and hedges than be gueſts at this divine feaſt? Will ye refuſe the invitation, when without theſe bleſſings you muſt famiſh for ever?

However, if ye refuſe, I hope I ſhall be able to make my report to my Maſter, like the ſervant in my text; *Lord, it is done as thou haſt commanded.* "Lord, I have publiſhed thy gracious invitations, and perſuaded them, in the beſt manner I could, to come in; and if they ſtill

refuſe, themſelves muſt be accountable for it, and bear the conſequence."

But I muſt indulge the pleaſing hope, that ſome of you will this day accept this gracious invitation; and ſuch of you may be ſure you ſhall be admitted. Nay, if all this aſſembly ſhould unanimouſly conſent, they would find the bleſſings of the goſpel more than ſufficient to ſupply all their wants. For after the ſervant had brought in a numerous company of gueſts, from the ſtreets and lanes, he tells his Lord, *yet there is room:* there is room for many more gueſts. There are many ſeats ſtill vacant; the room is large, and will contain many more; and the proviſion is ſufficient, more than ſufficient, for thouſands, for millions more. Yes, my dear brethren, be not diſcouraged from coming, as if there was no room left for you. The virtue of that blood which ſtreamed upon mount Calvary about 1700 years ago, which has waſhed away many millions of ſins, from the fall of Adam to this day, through the ſpace of near 6000 years; I ſay the virtue of that blood is ſtill as powerful and ſufficient as ever, as powerful and ſufficient as when it firſt flowed warm from the wounded veins of the bleſſed Jeſus. *The mercy of God endureth for ever.* It is an inexhauſtible ocean, ſufficient to overwhelm and drown a world of the moſt mountainous ſins, and ſupply the moſt numerous and deſperate neceſſities. The church of Chriſt is ſufficiently large for the reception of all the inhabitants of the earth, and it is a growing ſtructure, which never will be complete, till all nations are incorporated in it as living ſtones. In heaven are many manſions, prepared for the reception of many gueſts to the marriage-ſupper of the Lamb; and many of them are as yet empty; and may they be filled up by multitudes from this place! There, I hope, are ſeats provided for ſome of you, who are now *ſtrangers from the commonwealth of Iſrael, and from the covenant of promiſe.* I do not mean that you can be admitted there in your preſent condition: neither you nor I have any reaſon to hope

hope for this; but I hope that divine grace may yet prepare you for thoſe manſions of purity and glory. This hope gives a new ſpring to my endeavours, and therefore I invite the worſt of you, the moſt impenitent and audacious, the moſt profligate and debauched among you, to come in. Come, O my guilty brethren! Come, publicans and ſinners, drunkards, harlots, and thieves; come, ſinners of the vileſt characters, *repent and believe the goſpel*, you ſhall be admitted to this celeſtial feaſt. O! muſt it not break the heart of the hardieſt ſinner among you, to hear, that, after all your aggravated and long-continued provocations, and notwithſtanding your enormous guilt, that great God whom you have offended, though he ſtands in no need of you, and might eaſily glorify himſelf by inflicting righteous puniſhment upon you, yet, is ready to waſh away all your ſins in the blood of his own Son, and to beſtow upon you all the immortal bleſſings of his favour? O! is there a heart among you proof againſt ſuch a melting conſideration as this? Then all the principles of generoſity and gratitude are loſt and extinct within you!

I proclaim to all in this aſſembly this day, *all things are now ready; come unto the marriage.* And why ſhould you not all comply? why ſhould any of you exclude yourſelves? Let every one reſolve for himſelf, "for my part, I will not make myſelf that ſhocking exception." How do you know, but this reſolution is now forming in the perſon that ſits or ſtands next you? And ſhall you be left behind? Will you, as it were, ſhut the door of heaven againſt yourſelves with your own hand? I once more aſſure you, there is yet room, room for you all. There are Abraham, Iſaac, and Jacob, and the patriarchs, and *yet there is room.* There are many from the eaſt, and from the weſt, from the north, and from the ſouth, and *yet there is room.* There are perſecuting Manaſſeh and Paul; there are Mary Magdalene, the demoniac, and Zaccheus the publican, and *yet there is room.* There is the

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once inceſtuous and excommunicated, but afterwards penitent Corinthian; nay, there are ſeveral of the Corinthians, who, as St. Paul tells us, were once fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, effeminate, ſodomites, covetous, thieves, drunkards, revilers, and extortioners, yet there they now are, *waſhed, ſanctified, juſtified in the name of the Lord Jeſus, and by the ſpirit of our God:* and there may you alſo be, though vile as they, if, with them, you come in at the call of the goſpel; for *yet there is room.* There is, ſays St. John, Rev. vii. 9. a *great multitude, which no man can number, out of every kindred, and tongue, and nation;* multitudes from Europe, Aſia, Africa and America; and *and yet there is room.* There is room for you, poor negroes; and for you, I hope, ſome vacant ſeats in heaven are reſerved. Therefore *I turn to the Gentiles; for to you alſo is the word of this ſalvation ſent.* You may, with peculiar propriety, be repreſented by the poor, the blind, the halt, and maimed, in the highways and hedges. To you therefore I am ſent with the offer of all the rich bleſſings of the goſpel: and let me tell you, you are in extreme need of them, whether you feel your want or not: you need them more than liberty, than food, than health, than life itſelf; and without them, you muſt periſh for ever. Come then, let this feaſt be adorned with your ſable countenances, and furniſhed with gueſts from the ſavage wilds of Africa. Do not miſtake me, as if I was juſt now inviting you to ſit down at the Lord's table: alas! many have ſat there, who are now baniſhed for ever from that Saviour, whom they profeſſed to commemorate; and ſhut up in the priſon of hell. But I am inviting you to accept of the bleſſings of the goſpel, which I have briefly explained to you. A hearty conſent to this, and nothing ſhort of it will ſave you. Come then, ye poor Africans, come add yourſelves to the gueſts at this divine entertainment; for yet there is room for you, and you are as welcome as kings and princes.

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There being ſo much room left unoccupied in the ſpacious apartment, is repreſented as an excitement to the maſter of the feaſt to ſend out his ſervant to invite more gueſts: for when the ſervant had made this report, the maſter immediately orders him to *go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that his houſe might be filled.* He could not bear it, that the ſeats about his table ſhould be empty, or his proviſions be loſt for want of gueſts. So the bleſſed God will not ſuffer the death of his Son to be in vain, nor the manſions he has prepared to be empty. That Jeſus may ſee his ſpiritual ſeed, and the travail of his ſoul, and be ſatisfied; and that the heavenly manſions he has prepared may be furniſhed with gueſts, God has appointed the miniſtry of the goſpel, and the means of grace, to be continued from age to age; for this end he exerciſes a providential government over the world, and manages all its affairs in ſubſerviency to the grand ſcheme of redemption, for peopling the heavenly world with colonies tranſplanted from our guilty globe. For this he has continued our ſinful world, ſo ripe for deſtruction, through the ſpace of near 6000 years; and he will not be defeated in his purpoſe. If you and thouſands more ſhould refuſe, yet his feaſt ſhall be furniſhed with gueſts. He will ſend his goſpel where it will not paſs for ſuch a trifle as it does among many of us. He will ſend it, where thouſands of periſhing ſinners will eagerly embrace it, and obtain eternal ſalvation by it. But O! how deplorable will be your loſs! Since his houſe ſhall and muſt be filled, O! why ſhould it not be filled from Virginia, and particularly from among you, my dear people? Will you not make trial, whether there be not ſeats prepared in heaven for you? whether there be not room in the arms of divine mercy for you? whether the blood of Chriſt has not efficacy to procure pardon and life even for you, great ſinners as you are? How can I forbear to urge this propoſal upon my dear congregation? We meet together in the houſe of God

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on earth; and many of us ſit down together at his table. And O! why ſhould we not all meet together at the great ſupper of the Lamb in heaven? Why ſhould we not, as it were, make an appointment, and engage to meet one another there, after the diſperſion which death will ſoon make among us? While tranſported with ſo agreeable a thought, I feel myſelf zealous to execute the commiſſion in my text.

Compel them to come in. Overcome them with arguments, ſubdue them with perſuaſions and entreaties, take no denial; never give over till you prevail. This is the commiſſion of the goſpel-miniſters: and O! that one of the meaneſt of them may be enabled to act according to it!

The patrons of perſecution, thoſe common enemies of liberty, religion and human nature, have tortured this text to ſpeak in their favour; and it has been their misfortune to be confirmed in their ſavage ſentiment by the opinion of good St. Auguſtine, who underſtood it as authorizing and even requiring the propagation of Chriſtianity, and the ſuppreſſion of erroneous opinions, by the terrors of the ſecular power. In anſwer to this, I might obſerve, that we often find the word here rendered *compel*, † uſed in ſuch a mild ſenſe, as to ſignify only a compulſion by argument and intreaty. But it is ſufficient to obſerve, that it is evident Chriſt never commiſſioned his apoſtles, nor did they ever pretend to propagate his religion, like Mahomet, with a ſword in their hand, but by dint of evidence, and the power of the Holy Spirit:—and indeed, no other arms were fit to propagate a rational religion.

† *anagkaſon.*

So Matt. xiv. 22. and Mark vi. 45. *enagkaſen o Jeſous tous mathetas autou embenai*, Jeſus compelled or conſtrained his diſciples to go into a ſhip. St. Paul, in his reproof to St. Peter, Gal. ii. 14. tells him, "Why doſt thou *compel* or *conſtrain* [*anagkazeis*] the Gentiles to act as do the Jews?" In which places, the word ſignifies *to compel*, not by violence, but by command, perſuaſion, or example. And in this ſenſe men are, and ought to be, compelled to embrace the goſpel.—Thus Tertullian, Qui ſtuduerit intelligere, *cogetur* et *credere.*

religion. The terrors of the ſecular arm may ſcare men into the profeſſion of a religion, but they have no tendency to enlighten the underſtanding, or produce a real faith; and therefore they are fitted only to make hypocrites, but can never make one genuine, rational Chriſtian. The weapons of the apoſtolic warfare, which were ſo mighty through God, were miracles, reaſoning, intreaty, and the love of a crucified Saviour; and theſe were adapted to the nature of the human mind, to ſubdue it without violence, and ſweetly captivate every thought into obedience to Chriſt.

Theſe weapons, as far as they may be uſed in our age, I would try upon you. I would compel you to come in, by conſiderations ſo weighty and affecting, that they muſt prevail, unleſs reaſon, gratitude, and every generous principle be entirely loſt within you. By the conſideration of your own extreme, periſhing neceſſity; by the conſideration of the freeneſs, the fulneſs, and ſufficiency of the bleſſings offered; by the dread authority, by the mercy and love of the God that made you, and who is your conſtant Benefactor; by the meekneſs and gentleneſs of Chriſt; by the labours and toils of his life; by the agonies of his death; by his repeated injunctions, and by his melting invitations; by the operation of the Holy Spirit upon your hearts, and by the warnings of your own conſciences; by the eternal joys of heaven, and the eternal pains of hell; by theſe conſiderations, and by every thing ſacred, important and dear to you; I exhort, I intreat, I charge, I adjure you, I would compel you to come in. You have refuſed, you have loitered, you have heſitated long enough; therefore now at length come in; come in immediately, without delay. Come in, that theſe rich proviſions may not be loſt for want of partakers, and that God's houſe may be completely furniſhed with gueſts. As yet there is room; as yet the gueſts are invited; as yet the door is not ſhut. The number of thoſe who ſhall enjoy this great ſalvation is not yet made up. There-

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fore you may preſs in among them, and be added to their happy company. But, ere long, the miniſtry of the goſpel will be withdrawn, the ſervants be recalled, and no longer be ſent to ſearch for you. The door of heaven will be ſhut againſt all the workers of iniquity. Therefore, now is the time to come in.

I ſhall only urge, as another perſuaſive, the awful denunciation that concludes my text; *I ſay unto you, none of thoſe men who were bidden,* and refuſed the invitation, ſhall ſo much as *taſte of my ſupper*; that is, none who now refuſe to receive the bleſſings of the goſpel, as they are offered, ſhall ever enjoy any of them; but muſt conſume away a miſerable eternity in the want of all that is good and happy.

SERMON LVI.

THE NATURE OF *JUSTIFICATION*, AND THE NATURE AND CONCERN OF *FAITH* IN IT.

ROM. i. 16, 17. *For I am not aſhamed of the goſpel of Chriſt, for it is the power of God unto ſalvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew firſt, and alſo to the Greek: for therein the righteouſneſs of God is revealed from faith to faith—Or, therein is the righteouſneſs of God by faith revealed to faith.**

HOWEVER little the goſpel of Chriſt is eſteemed in the world, it is certainly the moſt gracious and important diſpenſation of God towards the ſons of men, or elſe our Bible is mere extravagance and fable;

* Doddridge in loc.

fable; for the Bible ſpeaks of it with the higheſt encomiums, and the ſacred writers are often in tranſports when they mention it. It is called *the goſpel of the grace of God*, Acts xx. 24. *the goſpel of ſalvation*, Eph. i. 13. *the glorious goſpel*, or, *the goſpel of the glory of* † *Chriſt*, 2 Cor. iv. 4. *the goſpel of peace*, Eph. vi. 15. nay its very name has ſomething endearing in the ſound, [*Euaggelion*] *good tidings, joyful news.* It is *the wiſdom of God in a myſtery*, 1 Cor. ii. 7. *the myſtery which had been hid from ages and from generations*, Col. i. 26. *the miniſtration of the Spirit, and of righteouſneſs*, which far exceeds all former diſpenſations in glory. 2 Cor. iii. 8, 9. And it is repreſented as the only ſcheme for the ſalvation of ſinners. When the wiſdom of the world had uſed its utmoſt efforts in vain, it pleaſed God, by the deſpiſed preaching of this humble goſpel, to ſave them that believe. 1 Cor. i. 21. In my text it is called *the power of God unto ſalvation to every one that believeth, whether Jew or Gentile.* St. Paul, though the humbleſt man that ever lived, declares he would not be aſhamed of profeſſing and preaching the goſpel of Chriſt, even in Rome, the metropolis of the world, the ſeat of learning, politeneſs and grandeur. He repreſents it as a catholicon, an univerſal remedy, equally adapted to Jews and Greeks, to the poſterity of Abraham, and the numerous Gentile nations, and equally needed by them all.

Now this muſt be all extravagance and oſtentatious parade, unleſs there be ſomething peculiarly glorious and endearing in the goſpel. It muſt certainly give the moſt illuſtrious diſplay of the divine perfections; it muſt be the moſt grand contrivance of infinite wiſdom; the moſt rich and amazing exertion of unbounded goodneſs: and particularly, it muſt bear the moſt favourable aſpect upon the guilty ſons of men, and be the beſt, nay, the only ſcheme for their ſalvation. And what are the glorious peculiarities, what are the endearing recommendations of this goſpel?

† Euaggeliou tes doxes tou Chriſtou.

One of them, in which we are nearly intereſted, ſtrikes our eyes in my text, *For therein is the righteouſneſs of God revealed from faith to faith.* Here let us inquire into the meaning of the expreſſions, and point out the connection.

The righteouſneſs of God has generally one uniform ſignification in the writings of St. Paul; and by it he means that righteouſneſs, upon the account of which a ſinner is juſtified; that righteouſneſs, for the ſake of which his ſins are forgiven, and he is reſtored to the divine favour: in ſhort, it is our only juſtifying righteouſneſs. It may be called the righteouſneſs of God, to diſtinguiſh it from our own perſonal righteouſneſs: it is the righteouſneſs of God, a complete, perfect, divine and God-like righteouſneſs, and not the mean, imperfect, ſcanty righteouſneſs of ſinful, guilty men. So it ſeems to be taken, Rom. x. 3. *Being ignorant of God's righteouſneſs, and going about to eſtabliſh their own righteouſneſs, they have not ſubmitted themſelves to the righteouſneſs of God:* where the righteouſneſs of God is directly oppoſed to and diſtinguiſhed from their own righteouſneſs.

The various deſcriptions of this righteouſneſs, and of juſtification by it, which we find in the apoſtolic writings, may aſſiſt us to underſtand the nature of it; and therefore it may be proper for me to lay them before you in one view. It is frequently called the righteouſneſs of Chriſt; and it is ſaid to conſiſt in his obedience: *by the obedience of one, ſhall many be made righteous.* Rom. v. 19. Now obedience conſiſts in the ſtrict obſervance of a law; and conſequently the obedience of Chriſt, which is our juſtifying righteouſneſs, conſiſts in his obedience to the law of God. Hence he is ſaid to be *the end of the law for righteouſneſs to every one that believeth.* Rom. x. 4, 5. To be juſtified by his righteouſneſs, is the ſame thing as to be juſtified by his blood, Rom. v. 9. to be reconciled to God by his death, &c. verſe 10. From whence we may learn, that the ſufferings of Chriſt are a principal part of this righteouſneſs;

righteouſneſs; or, that he not only obeyed the precept, but alſo endured the penalty of the divine law in our ſtead; and that it is only on this account we can be juſtified. This righteouſneſs is called the righteouſneſs of God without the law, Rom. iii. 21. an imputed righteouſneſs without works. Rom. iv. 6. And it is plain, from the whole tenor of this epiſtle, and that to the Galatians, that the righteouſneſs by which we are juſtified, is entirely different from our own obedience to the law: and hence we may learn, that our own merit or good works do not in whole or in part conſtitute our juſtifying righteouſneſs; but that it is wholly, entirely and excluſively, the merit of Chriſt's obedience and ſufferings.

This righteouſneſs is often called the righteouſneſs of faith. Thus, according to ſome, it is denominated in my text, which may be thus rendered, *For in it the righteouſneſs of God by faith is revealed to faith:* and this is moſt agreeable to the phraſeology of this epiſtle. Others, following our tranſlation—or the apparent order of the original, underſtand it in another ſenſe; yet ſtill ſo as to aſſign faith a peculiar concern in the affair. *The righteouſneſs of God is revealed from faith to faith;* that is, according to ſome, it is entirely and all through by faith; * or, from one degree of faith to another; or, from faith to faith, from believer to believer, all the world over, among Jews and Gentiles; or from the faithfulneſs of God in the word, to the grace of faith in the heart. You ſee, that whatever ſenſe you put upon this difficult phraſe, it ſtill coincides with or countenances the tranſlation, which I would rather chooſe, *The righteouſneſs of faith is revealed to faith.* So it is expreſsly called in Romans, iii. 22. *the righteouſneſs of God, which is by the faith of Chriſt.* See chap. iv. 11, 13. x. 6. Phil. iii. 9. *Not having my own righteouſneſs, which is of the law, but that which is by the faith of Chriſt, the righteouſneſs which is of God by faith.* From whence we may infer, that faith has a peculiar concurrence

* See Mr. Locke.

concurrence of inſtrumentality in our juſtification by the righteouſneſs of Chriſt. I need not enlarge on this particular; for to be juſtified by faith in Chriſt, in his blood, by believing in Chriſt, and the like, are ſuch frequent ſcripture-expreſſions, as put the matter out of all doubt.

My text farther obſerves, that in the goſpel this juſtifying righteouſneſs is revealed to faith; that is, in the goſpel it is clearly diſcovered, propoſed and offered as an object of faith. The light of nature is all darkneſs and uncertainty on this important point; it can only offer obſcure and miſtaken conjectures concerning the method of pardon and acceptance for a guilty ſinner; it leaves the anxious conſcience ſtill unſatisfied, and perplexed with the grand inquiry, "Wherewith ſhall I come before the Lord? How ſhall ſuch a guilty creature as I re-obtain the favour of my provoked ſovereign?" It may ſuggeſt ſome plauſible things in favour of repentance, as the only method of pardon; it may flatter the ſinner, that a God of infinite goodneſs will not rigorouſly execute his law; and it may draw a veil over the attribute of his juſtice; and thus it may build the hopes of the ſinner upon the ruin of the divine government, and the diſhonour of the divine perfections. But a method of juſtification by the righteouſneſs of another, by the obedience and death of an incarnate God; by his perfect obedience to the law, and complete ſatisfaction to juſtice, inſtead of the ſinner; a method, in which ſin may be pardoned, and in the mean time, the honours of the divine government advanced, and the divine perfections glorioufly illuſtrated; this is *a myſtery*, which was *hid from ages and generations;* this was a grand ſecret, which all the ſages and philoſophers, and all the ſons of men, who had nothing but the light of nature for their guide, could not diſcover, nor indeed ſo much as gueſs at.—This ſcheme was as far above their thoughts as the heavens are above the earth. Nothing but infinite wiſdom could contrive it: nothing but omniſcience could

could reveal it. In the writings of Moſes and the prophets, indeed, we meet with ſome glimmerings of it; ſome few rays of goſpel-light were reflected back from the Sun of Righteouſneſs, through the dark medium of 3 or 4000 years, and ſhone upon the minds of the Jews, in the ſacrifices, and other ſignificant types of the law, and in the prophecies of the Old Teſtament writers; and hence the apoſtle ſays, that *the righteouſneſs of God is witneſſed by the law and the prophets*, Rom. iii. 21. but it is in the goſpel alone that it is explicitly and fully revealed; in the goſpel alone it is propoſed in full glory, as a proper object for a diſtinct, particular and explicit faith.

And hence you may eaſily ſee the ſtrong and ſtriking connection of the text. You may connect this ſentence, *For therein is the righteouſneſs of God revealed from faith to faith*, with the firſt part of a foregoing text, *I am not aſhamed of the goſpel of Chriſt;* and then the ſenſe will be, "No wonder I am not aſhamed of the goſpel of Chriſt among Jews or Gentiles, and even in Rome itſelf; for it makes a moſt glorious and important diſcovery, in which they are all concerned; a diſcovery which the Jews, with all the advantages of the law and the prophets, could not clearly make; a diſcovery which the Greeks, with all their learning and philoſophy, and the Romans, with all their power and improvements, could not ſo much as gueſs at; and that is the diſcovery of a complete God-like righteouſneſs, by which the guilty ſons of men of every nation under heaven, may obtain juſtification from all their ſins; a righteouſneſs which is a ſufficient foundation for the hopes of ſinners, and gives the moſt majeſtic and amiable view of the great God; a righteouſneſs, without which Jews and Gentiles, and even the Romans in the height of empire, muſt unavoidably, irreparably, univerſally, and eternally periſh, in promiſcuous ruin." Such a glorious and divine righteouſneſs does the neglected and deſpiſed goſpel reveal; ſuch a benevolent, gracious, and reviving diſcovery

covery does it make; and who would be aſhamed of ſuch a goſpel! "For my part," ſays St. Paul, "I am not aſhamed of it, but would boldly publiſh it unto kings and emperors, to ſages and philoſophers; and whatever ſufferings I endure for its ſake, ſtill I glory in ſo good a cauſe, and would ſpend and be ſpent in its ſervice."

Or we may join this clauſe, *For therein is the righteouſneſs of God revealed from faith to faith*, with the laſt part of the preceding verſe, *For it is the power of God unto ſalvation*, &c. and then the connection will run thus: "The goſpel of Chriſt, ſo deſtitute of all carnal and ſecular recommendations, is ſufficiently recommended to univerſal acceptance by this, that it is the only powerful and efficacious expedient for the ſalvation of all ſuch as believe it, whether they be Jews or Gentiles. And no wonder it is attended with this divine power and efficacy, for in it, and in it only, the righteouſneſs of God by faith is revealed to the faith and acceptance of a guilty world. No religion but that of a Mediator, can provide or propoſe ſuch a righteouſneſs; and yet, without ſuch a righteouſneſs, no ſinner, whether Jew or Gentile, can be ſaved: and, on the other hand, the revelation of ſuch a righteouſneſs directly tends to promote the important work of ſalvation, as it encourages the deſpairing ſinner, and inſpires him with vigour: and as it lays a foundation for the honourable communication of the influences of the Holy Spirit, without which this work can never be effected."

I hope theſe things are ſufficient to give you a view of the ſenſe and connection of the text. And there is only one thing I would repeat and illuſtrate before I proceed to a methodical proſecution of my ſubject; and that is, That the righteouſneſs of God, or the righteouſneſs of Chriſt, on account of which we are juſtified, ſignifies the obedience and ſufferings of Jeſus Chriſt, to anſwer the demands of the law, which we had broken; or, as it is uſually expreſſed, "his active and

and paſſive obedience." He obeyed the law, and endured its penalty, as the ſurety or ſubſtitute of ſinners; that is, he did all this, not for himſelf, but for them, or in their ſtead. This is a matter of ſo much importance, that you ſhould by all means rightly underſtand it; and I hope it is now ſufficiently plain without enlarging upon it, though I thought it neceſſary to repeat it.

My thoughts on this intereſting ſubject I intend to diſpoſe in the following order:

I. I ſhall briefly explain to you the nature of juſtifying faith, and ſhew you the place it has in our juſtification.

II. I ſhall ſhew, that no righteouſneſs but that which the goſpel reveals is ſufficient for the juſtification of a ſinner: And,

III. I ſhall evince that it is the goſpel only which reveals ſuch a righteouſneſs.

I. I am to explain to you the nature of juſtifying faith, and ſhew you the place it has in our juſtification.

You ſee I do not propoſe to explain the general nature of faith, as it has for its object the word of God in general; but only under that formal notion, as it has a peculiar inſtrumentality in our juſtification. When I mentioned the term juſtification, it occurs to my mind that ſome of you may not underſtand it; and for the ſake of ſuch, I would explain it. You cannot but know what it is to be pardoned, or forgiven, after you have offended; and it muſt be equally plain to you what it is to be loved, and received into favour, by a perſon whom you have offended; and theſe two things are meant by juſtification: when you are juſtified, God pardons or forgives you all your ſins; and he receives you again into his love and favour, and gives you a title to everlaſting happineſs. I hope this important point is now ſufficiently plain to you all; and I return to obſerve, that I intend to conſider faith at preſent, only under that formal notion,

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as we are juſtified by it; and in that view it is evident that the Lord Jeſus, as a Saviour who died for ſinners, is its peculiar object. Hence a juſtifying faith is ſo often deſcribed in ſcripture in ſuch terms as theſe; *Believing in Chriſt, faith in his blood,* &c. and the righteouſneſs of Chriſt, by which we are juſtified, is called *the righteouſneſs of faith, the righteouſneſs which is of God by faith,* &c. Therefore a juſtifying faith in Chriſt includes theſe two things—a full perſuaſion of the truth of that method of ſalvation through the righteouſneſs of Jeſus Chriſt, which the goſpel reveals—and a hearty approbation of and conſent to that method of ſalvation.

(I.) A juſtifying faith includes a full perſuaſion of the truth of that method of ſalvation through the righteouſneſs of Jeſus Chriſt, which the goſpel reveals.

Faith, in its general nature, is the belief of a thing upon the teſtimony of another. A divine faith is the belief of a thing upon the teſtimony of God; and conſequently faith in Chriſt muſt be the belief of the teſtimony of God concerning him in the goſpel. Hence faith is ſaid to be a receiving *the witneſs of God, which he hath teſtified of his Son;* and unbelief, on the other hand, is the *not believing the record which God gave of his Son.* 1 John v. 9, 10. Now St. John tells us, that the ſubſtance of *the record or teſtimony, which God hath given of his Son, is this: That God hath given unto us eternal life; and this life is in his Son,* verſe 11. that is, "God in the goſpel teſtifies, that he has eſtabliſhed and revealed a method of beſtowing immortal life and bleſſedneſs upon guilty ſinners, who were juſtly condemned to everlaſting death. And he farther teſtifies, that it is only in and through his Son Jeſus Chriſt that this life and bleſſedneſs can be obtained; it is only through him that it can be hoped for; and nothing appears but horror and deſpair from every other quarter. Now faith is a firm, affecting perſuaſion of the truth of this gracious and important teſtimony. And as the foundation of all is, that Jeſus Chriſt is the Son

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of God, the true Meſſiah, promiſed as the Saviour of ſinners; hence it is, that believing that Jeſus is the Chriſt, the Son of God, &c. is ſo frequently the definition of faith.

The ſcheme of ſalvation through Jeſus Chriſt, ſuppoſes that all are ſinners, expoſed to condemnation, and unable to make ſatisfaction for their offences, or merit the divine favour by any thing they can do or ſuffer; and repreſents the Lord Jeſus as ſubſtituting himſelf in the place of the guilty, bearing the puniſhment due to their ſin, and obeying the law of God in their ſtead; and it repreſents our injured Sovereign as willing to be reconciled to ſuch of his guilty creatures, on this account; but then that, in order to enjoy the bleſſings of righteouſneſs, they muſt, as guilty, helpleſs ſinners, place their whole dependance upon it, and plead it as the only ground of their juſtification; and that, though they muſt abound in good works, yet they muſt not make theſe in the leaſt the ground of their hopes of pardon and acceptance. This is the ſubſtance of the teſtimony of God in the goſpel: this teſtimony has been repeatedly publiſhed in your ears; and if you have believed with a juſtifying faith, you have yielded a full aſſent to this teſtimony; you are thoroughly convinced, and deeply ſenſible that theſe things are true, and you can cheerfully venture your eternal all upon the truth of them. You are convinced that this Jeſus is indeed the only Saviour; that his righteouſneſs is alone ſufficient, and to the entire excluſion of every other righteouſneſs in point of juſtification. Such a faith may appear a very eaſy thing to a careleſs, impenitent ſinner, who has imbibed this belief from his earlieſt days, and found no more difficulty in it than in learning his creed, or aſſenting to a piece of hiſtory. But a perſon of this character is not at all the ſubject of a ſaving faith; it is the poor ſelf-condemned penitent, broken-hearted ſinner, that is capable of ſuch a faith: and truly it is no eaſy matter to him: for one that ſees his ſins in all their aggrava-

tions, the divine law, and the righteous ſeverity of divine juſtice; one that finds the luſts and prejudices of his heart riſing againſt this method of ſalvation as fooliſhneſs, and as giving an intolerable mortification to his pride and vanity; for ſuch a one to believe, is not an eaſy matter; *it is the working of God's mighty power.* Eph. i. 19. But,

(II.) A juſtifying fait hmore peculiarly includes a hearty approbation of and conſent to this method of ſalvation by the righteouſneſs of Jeſus Chriſt.

To believe the goſpel as a true hiſtory; to believe it as a true theory or ſpeculation, with a languor, an indifferency or a diſaffection of heart, this indeed is the common popular faith of our country, and it generally prevails where the profeſſion of chriſtianity is become faſhionable; but alas! it is not that faith by which we can be juſtified and ſaved. A hearty approbation of the way of ſalvation through Chriſt; a willing, delightful dependance of the whole ſoul upon his righteouſneſs; a free, vigorous choice of it, and a cheerful conſent to all the terms of the goſpel; this is eſſential to ſuch a faith. It is the greateſt incongruity to ſuppoſe that it is ſufficient to believe the goſpel with a luke-warm indifferency, or a careleſs unaffecting aſſent; or that our faith in Chriſt ſhould be merely the act of a conſtrained, neceſſitated ſoul. He is the beloved Son of God, in whom he is well-pleaſed; and we muſt be well-pleaſed with him too, before we can expect ſalvation by him. To receive a ſcheme which God has ſo much at heart, a ſcheme, for the accompliſhment of which Jeſus bled and died; a ſcheme on which our everlaſting life depends, and without which we are undone for ever, to receive ſuch a ſcheme with a languid aſſent, what profaneneſs! what impiety!

If you have ever truly believed in Jeſus Chriſt, my brethren, it has not been the languid act of a cold, impenitent, unwilling heart, but your whole ſouls have exerted their utmoſt vigour in it, and it has been the moſt cheerful, animated act of your whole lives. It is true,

true, neceſſity had no ſmall influence in the caſe. You ſaw, you felt yourſelves loſt for ever without this righteouſneſs; you ſaw no other way of eſcape or ſafety; you found yourſelves ſhut up to the faith; and it was this ſenſe of your neceſſity that firſt ſet you upon ſeeking after Chriſt, and turned your thoughts towards this method of ſalvation. But when God *ſhined into your hearts, to give you the light of the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jeſus Chriſt*, when you received the firſt glances of his glorious righteouſneſs, and heard, as with new ears, the offer of it in the goſpel, ſtand, and pauſe, and recollect what were your ſentiments, and the temper of your heart in that important and memorable hour. Was not their language, "Bleſſed Jeſus! till now I have been blindly ſeeking after thee from a ſervile principle, not from the agreeable conſtraint of love, but from the painful compulſion of fear, horror, and neceſſity; not becauſe I deſired thee on account of thine own excellency, but becauſe I was deſirous to be ſaved from hell, though it ſhould be by an unacceptable hand. I have been ſtriving to work up my reluctant heart to a compliance with thy goſpel, not becauſe I ſaw thy glory, but merely becauſe I muſt periſh for ever if I reject it. But now, when I ſee thy glory, O thou lovely Saviour, I long and languiſh for thee, and cheerfully receive thee, becauſe I love thee. Salvation itſelf is endeared to me, by the thought that it comes from thy dear hand. I place all my dependance on thy righteouſneſs, becauſe I ſee it is all illuſtrious and amiable, and ſecures the glory of God, which I have tenderly at heart, as well as my ſalvation. I now moſt cheerfully conſent to the method of ſalvation revealed in the goſpel, not only becauſe I muſt, but becauſe I chooſe to do ſo. I ſee it is a ſcheme *well ordered in all things, and ſure*, and therefore it is all my ſalvation, and all my deſire. I would not only be ſaved, but I would be ſaved by thee, bleſſed Jeſus! I am willing, I am deſirous, that thou, and not I, ſhould have the glory of it. I would rather ſee thy grace

grace honoured than my own vanity and pride flattered, and therefore I cheerfully renounce my own righteouſneſs, and count it but dreſs and dung, in compariſon of thine, which I embrace with all my heart. Pardon is ſweet to a guilty criminal; ſalvation is ſweet to a periſhing ſoul; but O! pardon by thy righteouſneſs, ſalvation through thy grace, this is doubly ſweet." Such, my brethren, has been, and ſuch ſtill is the language of your hearts, if you have ever received *the righteouſneſs of Chriſt by faith.*

And hence it follows, that faith ſuppoſes the ſupernatural illumination of the mind and renovation of the heart, by the power of divine grace. Alas! while nature is left in its original darkneſs and depravity, it has no ſuch views of the way of ſalvation through Chriſt, nor any ſuch delight in it. There are many, I am afraid, that ſecretly wonder what peculiar wiſdom and grace there ſhould be in the goſpel, and why God ſhould commend it ſo highly, and ſaints ſhould be in raptures when they ſpeak of it; for as for their part, they can diſcover no ſuch great matters in it. Their hearts are cold and careleſs about it, or form inſurrections againſt it. The way of ſalvation through the righteouſneſs of Chriſt is ſomething quite unnatural and mortifying to the ſinful ſons of men; they have no reliſh for it, nor aptitude or inclination to ſeek ſalvation in this way; it is much more natural for them to chooſe ſome other, though it ſhould be much more painful. They will ſubmit to the heavieſt penances and bodily auſterities; they will afflict themſelves with faſting; they will drudge at the duties of religion, in order to work out a righteouſneſs of their own; and they are as fond of the covenant of works to obtain life, as if it had never been broken. But tell them of a free ſalvation, purchaſed by Jeſus Chriſt, and offered in the goſpel; tell them that it is only on account of his righteouſneſs they can be pardoned, and that all their perſonal good works, however neceſſary for other purpoſes, muſt all ſtand for nothing

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in this affair; they are amazed, and wonder what you mean: it is ſtrange unintelligible doctrine to them, and their hearts riſe againſt it. Hence many a believer has found that it was eaſier for him to work up his heart to any thing than to believe in Jeſus Chriſt, and that God alone could enable him to do this. But, when God works in him the work of faith with power, he opens his underſtanding to ſee a ſurprizing glory in the mediatorial ſcheme of ſalvation, and gives him a heart to reliſh it: and without this, no external recommendations of this ſcheme, no ſpeculative conviction in its favour, can gain the cordial approbation of the ſinner.

I ſhall now endeavour, in a few words, to ſhew you the peculiar place which faith has in our juſtification. You may obſerve then, that as the righteouſneſs of Chriſt is the peculiar ground of our juſtification, ſo the grace of faith has a peculiar reference to that righteouſneſs; it is, as it were, the bent of the ſoul towards that particular object. Repentance has ſin for its object; love the intrinſic glory and communicated goodneſs of the divine nature; charity and juſtice have a reference to man; and none of theſe objects are the proper grounds of our juſtification; and conſequently none of theſe graces which terminate upon them can have any direct concurrence in it. But our juſtifying righteouſneſs is the immediate, direct object of faith; and therefore faith muſt have a ſpecial inſtrumentality in our juſtification.

And if we recollect what has been ſaid about the nature of faith, there will appear a peculiar propriety in conferring this honour upon it. It is certainly fit we ſhould believe in him who is our Saviour; and it would be abſurd to apply to him in that character, while we ſuſpect him for an impoſtor. It is fit we ſhould approve of the righteouſneſs by which we are juſtified, and heartily conſent to that ſcheme by which we are ſaved. And, on the other hand, it would be highly prepoſterous, that we ſhould be juſtified and

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ſaved by a Saviour, and in a way we deſpiſe or diſguſt. Theſe conſiderations ſhew not only the wiſdom, but the grace of the conſtitution. Approve of the Saviour, and you ſhall be ſaved; truſt in his righteouſneſs, and you ſhall be juſtified; conſent to the covenant of grace, and you ſhall inherit all its bleſſings; and could you deſire lower or eaſier terms? This approbation, this truſt, this conſent is faith: and now, I hope, you ſee the peculiar place it has in our juſtification. Let us now proceed,

II. To ſhew you that no righteouſneſs but that which the goſpel reveals is ſufficient for the juſtification of a ſinner.

In order to form a right judgment of this matter, we muſt place ourſelves in a proper ſituation, and view it in an advantageous point of light. Is a blind, ſelf-flattering ſinner, who does not ſee the ſtrictneſs of the law and juſtice of God, or who ſecretly murmurs at it as too preciſe and rigid, who does not ſee the infinite evil of ſin, but loves it, indulges it, and is expert in making excuſes for it, and diminiſhing its aggravations, who forms his maxims of the divine government from the procedure of weak and particular mortals in human governments, who compares himſelf with his fellow-ſinners, and not with the divine purity and the holy law of God, whoſe conſcience is ſecure, who places the tribunal of his ſupreme Judge far out of ſight, and who forms his notions of his government not from his word, but from the flattering ſuggeſtions of his own deceitful heart: I ſay, is ſuch a blind, partial, careleſs ſinner a competent judge in this matter? Is he likely to form a juſt eſtimate of the evil of ſin, and of that righteouſneſs which will be ſufficient for his acquaintance before a juſt and righteous God? By no means. But it is eaſy for ſuch a one to ſtart objections againſt this method of juſtification, and offer many plauſible arguments in favour of his own righteouſneſs, and to extenuate his own guilt. But let him be awakened to ſee himſelf and his ſins in a proper light,

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and let him ſee the purity and extent of the divine law, and make that the only teſt of his good works, let him realize the divine tribunal, and place himſelf in the immediate preſence of his Judge, let him be put in this ſituation, and then the controverſy will be ſoon at an end; then all his high thoughts of his own righteouſneſs are mortified; all his excuſes for his ſins are ſilenced; and then he ſees his abſolute need of a perfect and divine righteouſneſs, and the utter inſufficiency of his own. O ſirs! if you have ever placed yourſelves in this poſture, you have done forever with all diſputes on this point. What could eaſe your conſciences then but the complete righteouſneſs of Jeſus Chriſt? O! "none but Chriſt, none but Chriſt," then appeared ſufficient.

Here I beg leave to tranſlate a very animated and ſtriking paſſage, written about 200 years ago, by that great and good man, Calvin, who had long groped for ſalvation among the doctrines of merit in the church of Rome, but could find no relief, till the goſpel diſcovered this righteouſneſs to him. "It is a very eaſy thing, ſays he, to amuſe ourſelves with arguments for the ſufficiency of good works for juſtification, while we are ingeniouſly trifling in ſchools and colleges of learning; but when we come into the preſence of God, we have done with all ſuch amuſements; for there it is a very ſerious affair, and not a ludicrous logomachy, or an idle diſpute about words. There, there we muſt place ourſelves, if we would profitably inquire after the true righteouſneſs, and how we ſhall anſwer our celeſtial Judge when he ſhall call us to an account. Let us repreſent this Judge to ourſelves, not ſuch as our fancies would imagine him to be, but ſuch as he is really repreſented in the ſcriptures; as one by whoſe brightneſs the ſtars are turned into darkneſs; by whoſe power the mountains are melted; at whoſe anger the earth trembles; by whoſe wiſdom the wiſe are caught in their own craftineſs; before whoſe purity, all things are turned into pollu-

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tion; whoſe juſtice even angels are not ſufficient to bear; who will by no means clear the guilty; whoſe vengeance, when once it is kindled, burns and penetrates to the loweſt hell: let him, I ſay, ſit Judge on the actions of men, and who can ſecurely place himſelf before his throne of judgment?" *Lord, if thou mark iniquity, who, O Lord, ſhall ſtand!* "All muſt be condemned, and unavoidably periſh." *Shall mortal man be* juſtified before God? or be *purer than his Maker? Behold, he putteth no truſt in his ſervants; and his angels he chargeth with folly: how much leſs in them that dwell in houſes of clay, whoſe foundation is in the duſt, who are cruſhed before the moth!* Job iv. 17, &c. *Behold he putteth no truſt in his ſaints; yea, the heavens are not clean in his ſight; how much more abominable and filthy is man, who drinketh iniquity like water!* Job xv. 15, &c. "Eliphaz is ſtruck ſilent; for he ſees that God cannot be appeaſed even with angelic holineſs, if their works ſhould be brought to the impartial ſcale of Juſtice.—And certainly if our lives ſhould be compared to the ſtandard of the divine law, we muſt be ſtupid indeed, unleſs we are ſtruck with the terror of its curſes, and particularly of that, *Curſed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them.* And all the diſputes we may have about the method of juſtification are vain and inſipid, unleſs we place ourſelves as guilty before our heavenly Judge, and, ſolicitous for a pardon, voluntarily proſtrate and empty ourſelves before him.

"To this great tribunal, ſinners, you muſt lift your eyes, that, inſtead of vainly exalting yourſelves, you may learn to tremble before him. While the compariſon is between man and man, it is eaſy for every man to think he has ſomething which others ſhould not deſpiſe; but when we place ourſelves before God, all that confidence falls and periſhes in an inſtant."*

I might go on with my quotation from this excellent author; but this is ſufficient to ſhew you a grand pre-

* *Calvin. Inſtit.* Lib. iii.

pre-requiſite to the impartial determination of this point. And now, with a deep impreſſion of this, with a deep ſenſe of our ſins, and of the ſtrictneſs of the law and juſtice, and placing ourſelves, as in the preſence of our righteous Judge, let us inquire what righteouſneſs is ſufficient for our juſtification before him.

It may be of ſervice to obſerve, that there is ſomething ſingular in the phraſeology of ſcripture on this point, and different from what is uſed in other caſes of the ſame general nature. To receive a pardon is a very different thing in common language from being juſtified. When a man is pardoned, it ſuppoſes that he has broken the law, but that the law is diſpenſed with, and the threatened penalty not executed; but when he is juſtified, it ſuppoſes that he has a righteouſneſs equal to the demands of the law, and therefore that he may be acquitted according to juſtice.—Theſe, you ſee, are very different things; but in the affair before us they are happily united. The ſinner is ſaid to be pardoned and juſtified at once; and the reaſon of this unuſual dialect is this:—The ſinner has broken the divine law, and has no obedience to anſwer its demands; and therefore, his being freed from the guilt of ſin and the threatened puniſhment, is, in this reſpect, a gracious, unmerited pardon. But by faith he has received the righteouſneſs of Chriſt; and God imputes it to him as though it were his own; and his righteouſneſs anſwers all the requiſitions of the law, and it has no charges againſt him; ſo that in this reſpect he is juſtified, or pronounced righteous according to law and juſtice.

Hence it follows, from the very meaning of the terms uſed in this caſe, that no righteouſneſs can juſtify us in the ſight of God but that which is equal to all the demands of the divine law. It muſt be perfect, and conformed throughout to that ſtandard; for if it be not, we cannot be pronounced righteous in the eye of the law; but the law charges and condemns us as

tranſgreſſors, and its ſentence lies in full force againſt us. And now, if any of you have ſuch a perfect righteouſneſs, produce it, glory in it, and carry it with you to the divine tribunal, and demand acquittance there. But if you have not (as, if you know yourſelves, you muſt own you have not) then fall down as guilty ſinners before your righteous Judge, confeſs that you dare not appear in his preſence in your own righteouſneſs, but lay hold of and plead the righteouſneſs of Jeſus alone, otherwiſe the law thunders out its terrors againſt you, and juſtice will ſeize you as obnoxious criminals.

It was from ſuch premiſes as theſe that the apoſtle reaſoned when he drew this concluſion, *that by the deeds of the law no fleſh ſhall be juſtified,* Rom. iii. 20, 28. and that we are juſtified by faith without the deeds of the law. He grants, that if any can produce a perfect righteouſneſs of their own, they ſhall obtain life by the law: *the law,* ſays he, *is not of faith; but the man that doth* theſe things *ſhall live in them.* Gal. iii. 12. But then he proves that all the ſons of men, both Jews and Gentiles, have ſinned, and conſequently have no righteouſneſs agreeable to the law: he ſtops every mouth, and brings in the whole world as guilty before God; and hence he infers the impoſſibility of juſtification by the works of the law: and then he naturally introduces another righteouſneſs equal to all the demands of the law. *But now,* ſays he, *the righteouſneſs of God, without the law, is manifeſted—even the righteouſneſs of God, which is by the faith of Jeſus Chriſt unto all, and upon all them that believe:—being juſtified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Chriſt, whom God has ſet forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, for the remiſſion of ſins;—that he might be juſt, and the juſtifier of him that believeth in Jeſus.* Rom. iii. 21—26. O glorious ſcheme of ſalvation! O complete, divine righteouſneſs! a righteouſneſs by which Jew and Gentile, the greateſt ſinner as well as the leaſt, may be made divinely righteous, and completely juſtified,

juſtified, even at the bar of a holy and juſt God.—Here, ye guilty ſinners, ye condemned criminals, ye bleeding conſciences, here is the only righteouſneſs for you. Put forth the hand of faith, and humbly lay hold upon it. Here fix your truſt, and renounce your own righteouſneſs as filthy rags; for whatever you think of it now, this will be found the only defence at the tribunal of the ſupreme Judge.

It would be eaſy to collect a great variety of arguments to ſupport this important truth; but if you carefully read over the apoſtolic writings, particularly this epiſtle to the Romans, and that to the Galatians, you cannot but be ſatisfied for yourſelves. And this brings me in mind of a frank declaration of that true free-thinker and impartial inquirer after truth, Dr. Watts. "If I may be permitted to ſpeak of myſelf," ſays he, "I might acquaint the world with my own experience. After ſome years ſpent in the peruſal of controverſial authors, and finding them inſufficient to ſettle my judgment and conſcience, I reſolved to ſeek a determination of my doubts from the Epiſtles of St. Paul, eſpecially in that weighty doctrine of Juſtification. I peruſed his letter to the Romans with the moſt fixed meditation, laborious ſtudy, and importunate requeſts to God, for ſeveral months together. I very narrowly obſerved the daily motions of my own mind: I found it very hard to root out old prejudices, and to eſcape the danger of new ones. I met with ſome expreſſions of the apoſtle that ſwayed me to one opinion, and others, that inclined the balance of my thoughts another way; but I bleſs the Divine Goodneſs that enabled me at laſt to ſurmount all theſe difficulties, and eſtabliſhed my judgment and conſcience in that glorious and forſaken doctrine of the juſtification of a ſinner in the ſight of God, by the imputation of a perfect righteouſneſs, which is not originally his own."† This was the practice of this excellent man; and you ſee

† Orthodoxy and Charity united. Eſſay vii. § 1.

ſee the reſult of his ſearch. Go you and do likewiſe; and I doubt not but you will make the ſame diſcovery. —I am,

III. and laſtly, To ſhew that it is the goſpel only that reveals ſuch a righteouſneſs as is ſufficient for the juſtification of a ſinner.

The Jewiſh religion, as I obſerved before, gave ſeveral intimations of this method of juſtification by the righteouſneſs of another. There were many propheſies and types of this import; and this was undoubtedly the original deſign of ſacrifices; for it is quite unaccountable, that ever man ſhould imagine that they could appeaſe the wrath of God, and procure the pardon of ſin, by offering to him ſacrifices of brutes in their ſtead, unleſs we ſuppoſe that God did at firſt inſtitute this method to ſignify that the way in which he would be reconciled to ſinners was by the ſufferings and death of another, as a ſacrifice ſubſtituted in their room. This inſtitution ſeems to have been immediately after the fall of man, when the firſt beam of goſpel-light bleſſed our world in that promiſe, *the ſeed of the woman*, &c. for we are told that God made coats of ſkins, and with them covered our firſt parents. Gen. iii. 21. Now animal food was not allowed to man till after the flood; and conſequently thoſe beaſts, whoſe ſkins were uſed for this purpoſe, were not killed for that uſe: and we cannot ſuppoſe they died naturally ſo ſoon after their creation. It is therefore moſt probable that Adam had killed them for ſacrifices; and that God had commanded him to do this, immediately upon the promulgation of that promiſe, to typify the manner of its accompliſhment, namely, by the ſacrifice of Chriſt in the fulneſs of time. This practice we find continued by Cain and Abel: and thus Noah conſecrated the new world after the flood. Gen. viii. 20.

But though the patriarchs and Jews had theſe intimations of the method of pardon and acceptance, they were very dark and perplexing to them; and juſt as much as they had of this light, juſt ſo much they had of

of the goſpel; and therefore the goſpel, taking the word in its full extent, claims the honour of this diſcovery.

Now, if we except the patriarchal and Jewiſh religion, which had a mixture of the goſpel in it, there is none that pretends to diſcover a complete and perfect righteouſneſs and atonement for the juſtification of a ſinner. The religion of Mahomet is ſilent upon this head; and the Socrateſes and Platos of heathen antiquity, who had only the light of nature for their guide, knew nothing about it; much leſs did the ignorant populace, who are always the greater part of mankind. The cuſtom of ſacrifice was indeed univerſal; but, as it was received by a very remote tradition, mankind had quite loſt its original deſign; and they corrupted it into the moſt abſurd and cruel ſuperſtition. They offered their ſacrifices to imaginary deities, or (as the apoſtle tells us) to devils. 1 Cor. x. 20. They were ſo unnatural and barbarous, that they offered human ſacrifices, and even their own children, to propitiate their angry gods. And, if we may believe ſome of their beſt authors, this was often practiſed by the expreſs command of their oracles:—a ſufficient evidence that it was not the true God that gave anſwers by them. Alas! how were the poor creatures bewildered and perplexed about the method of expiating their ſins! They ſpared no coſt; *they offered even the fruit of their body for the ſin of their ſouls;* but alas! how vain, as well as impious a ſacrifice was this! and yet this was the utmoſt that nature in diſtreſs could do. They knew nothing of the great atonement which was to be made by the High Prieſt of the Chriſtian profeſſion, which the goſpel reveals to us. Nay, the Jews themſelves are often reproved by the prophets for their ſelf-righteous truſt in their ſacrifices, to the neglect of their morals, and the grand atonement which they prefigured. The light of nature might teach the heathen world, that if they perfectly obeyed the law of God, they might be aſſured of his favour, or at leaſt that they

they ſhould not be puniſhed; but it informed them in the mean time, that they had not done ſo, but, on the other hand, had repeatedly broken the law of God; and they had no notion at all of the poſſibility of their being juſtified by the righteouſneſs of another.

This alone determines the point I am now proving. I have ſhewn already, that a ſinner cannot be juſtified but by a perfect righteouſneſs; and it is evident that none of the ſons of men can pretend to ſuch a righteouſneſs. Where then can it be found? Conſult the light of nature; aſk the multitude in the heathen world; nay, aſk their moſt improved ſages and philoſophers, and you will find all ſilent, all bewildered and perplexed: nothing was ever farther from their thoughts than a complete atonement for ſin by the death of an innocent and divine perſon. I appeal to ſuch of the negroes as came from Africa as the beſt judges in this caſe. Did you ever hear in your own country, of a righteouſneſs equal to all the requiſitions of the law of God, by which you could be juſtified? Was there no thoughtful perſon among you whoſe conſcience was uneaſy about his ſins againſt a holy God, and who was concerned how he ſhould obtain a pardon? And what way did he take to eaſe his mind? Alas! he knew nothing of *the righteouſneſs of God by faith.* This happy diſcovery, poor creatures, you have met with in the land of your bondage; and O! if you make a proper uſe of it, it will make your ſlavery the greateſt bleſſing to you.

The light of nature might ſurmiſe a great many things upon this head, but alas! all was uncertain, and more frequently the dictates of ignorance and ſelf-flattery than of an enlightened mind. It might intimate, "that God is the compaſſionate Father of mankind, and therefore would diſpenſe with the threatenings of his law, and not execute them rigorouſly upon his own creatures." This we often hear urged by ſinners among ourſelves, who, notwithſtanding their profeſſion of Chriſtianity, will form a ſyſtem of religion,

on, and a ſcheme of reconciliation with God, according to their own ſelfiſh and flattering prejudices; and it ſeems to them incredible that God ſhould inflict eternal puniſhment on his own creatures for the ſins of a few years. But to this it might be replied, That ſince God is the Father of mankind, it is a more unnatural and aggravated wickedneſs to ſin againſt him: that he is not only the Parent, but alſo the Lawgiver and Judge of the world, and that he muſt ſuſtain both theſe characters with honour. He muſt exerciſe not only the fondneſs and indulgent diſcipline of a father, but alſo the juſtice and righteous ſeverity of a ruler and judge: he muſt maintain the honour of his law, and preſerve his government from contempt; and therefore the communications of his goodneſs muſt be conſiſtent with juſtice. He muſt alſo execute his laws upon ſinners, in order to warn and deter others; and therefore every ſinner muſt tremble for fear of the execution of the divine threatenings upon him. To all this I may add, That the miſeries that are inflicted by divine Providence in this world, and that very often upon the beſt of men, muſt increaſe the perplexity, and leave the ſinner in a dreadful ſuſpenſe.

If God does not ſuffer the ſins even of the beſt of men always to eſcape unpuniſhed in this world, but afflicts them with pains, ſickneſs, and an endleſs variety of calamities, how can our reaſon, that knows ſo little of the counſels of Heaven, aſſure us that he will not puniſh them alſo, and that with greater ſeverity, in the world to come? Nothing but a revelation from himſelf could eaſe an anxious mind from this dread ſuſpicion.

The light of nature may alſo perhaps ſurmiſe, "That repentance and reformation are ſufficient to procure the pardon of ſin:" and mankind ſeem naturally inclined to look for pardon in this way. Hence ſinners among ourſelves, notwithſtanding the clearer diſcoveries of the goſpel, fly to repentance and reformation, not only as a pre-requiſite to their ſalvation, but

as ſufficient ground of acceptance; and they gaze and wonder at a man if he intimates the contrary. It muſt be granted on all hands, that repentance and reformation are neceſſary; but the queſtion is, Are repentance and reformation alone ſufficient? And this is eaſily anſwered, if what has been proved before be true, viz. That no righteouſneſs but that which is perfect, and fully conformed to the divine law, can be ſufficient for our juſtification. Now repentance, at beſt, is but a reformation from a wrong courſe, and a return to obedience; which ſhould never have been interrupted. If the reformation were perfect, it would be but doing what we are obliged to do for the preſent time; and conſequently it can be no atonement or ſatisfaction to the law for paſt offences; but alas! it is imperfect, and therefore cannot pay the debt of obedience for the preſent time. The ſinner, in the midſt of all his repentance and reformation, is ſinning ſtill; there are guilty imperfections in his beſt duties; and can theſe atone for his paſt ſins? So that repentance and reformation cannot be a ſufficient juſtifying righteouſneſs. Again, What kind of government would that be among men, in which all crimes were pardoned upon repentance? What encouragement would this give to offenders? How ſoon would ſuch a government fall into contempt? and what a low idea would it give of the wiſdom and juſtice of the ruler, and of the evil of ſin! And ſhall the Supreme Ruler imitate ſo weak a conduct, and thus obſcure his perfections, depreciate his laws, and encourage vice!

It is a virtue in a private man to forgive an injury; and it may be a piece of generoſity in ſuch a one to give up ſome of his rights: but, as I have told you, God is not to be conſidered, in this caſe, as a private perſon, but as a Ruler, a ſupreme Ruler, at the head of the univerſe; and ſin is an offence againſt him in that capacity; and therefore, for reaſons of ſtate, it is not fit he ſhould put up with it, or remit it merely upon the ſinner's repentance. He muſt maintain the dignity

dignity of law and government, and conſult the public good; not the good of this man and that, nor even of the whole race of men, but of men through all their generations; of angels through all their various ranks and orders, and in ſhort, of the whole univerſe of reaſonable creatures; and the intereſt of individuals muſt be ſubſervient to the more general good of the whole. An error in ſuch an extenſive government, through an exceſſive lenity towards offenders, would have a moſt extenſive ill influence, and injure more worlds than we know of. If the magiſtrate in one particular government be lax in the execution of the laws, he may injure a whole nation; and if he ſhould ſuppoſe all the nations of the earth united in one univerſal monarchy, under one head; if that univerſal monarch ſhould be remiſs in the execution of juſtice, the conſequence would be ſtill more extenſively miſchievous. But what would be the conſequence, if the univerſal Ruler of heaven and earth and the whole creation, ſhould relax his law, and ſuffer ſin to go unpuniſhed, upon ſo cheap a retaliation as repentance? No human government could be ſupported upon this principle, much leſs the divine.

Further: It ſhould be conſidered, that, in order to encourage offenders to repent, it is neceſſary it ſhould be made a fixed conſtitution, and openly publiſhed, that whoſoever in all time coming ſhould be guilty of any offence againſt the laws of God, he ſhall be forgiven if he does but repent. Now what encouragement would ſuch a declaration give to ſin! It would alſo be unprecedented in human governments. It is true, civil rulers do forgive ſome offenders; but then they do not declare beforehand that they will do ſo, or who the objects of their clemency ſhall be. To make a previous declaration of this, would be to give licence to men to break the law. Let it be alſo conſidered, that when civil rulers forgive criminals, there is no neceſſity they ſhould receive them into ſpecial favour; but in the divine government theſe two things

are inſeperable: there is no medium between high favour and miſery. When God forgives, he receives the ſinner into complete happineſs and intimacy with himſelf, as well as reſcues him from puniſhment. And is it fit he ſhould do this, merely upon his repentance? How would ſuch a conduct look in human governments!

Finally, The pardon of a crime is a matter of ſovereignty, and only has place in ſuch governments where the royal prerogative is above law, and has a power to diſpenſe with it. Whether ſuch a prerogative belongs to the divine government (that is, whether it would be a perfection upon the whole in ſuch a government) I ſhall not now diſpute: but ſuppoſe it be, ſtill it is a matter of ſovereignty; that is, it lies entirely in the breaſt of the Supreme Ruler whether he will pardon penitents or not; and they can know his pleaſure no other way but by his declaring it. This conſideration therefore ſhews the neceſſity of a revelation from God to give a ſinner aſſurance that he will pardon him upon any terms. The light of nature leaves a ſinner entirely at mercy, and awfully uncertain whether ever he can re-obtain the favour of his offended Sovereign. Now this revelation we have in the goſpel, with the additional diſcovery of the way in which forgiveneſs and acceptance can be obtained. And it appears, from this ſhort ſurvey, that it is in the goſpel alone we can find this diſcovery.

I ſhall now conclude with two reflections.

I. Let this ſubject lead us to a ſtrict examination of the ground of our hopes, whether they be founded on the righteouſneſs of God alone, or partly at leaſt upon our own. To ſpeak freely, I am afraid that ſome of you, my dear people, have built upon this ſandy foundation: this may be the caſe of ſome of you who have very fair characters; for it is ſuch ſort of perſons, and not thoſe who make little or no pretenſions to good works, that are moſt in danger of the extreme of ſelf-righteouſneſs. I therefore beg you would inquire after

ter this fly, lurking deluſion; a deluſion which perverts the beſt things into the worſt, and makes your good works the occaſion of your deſtruction, inſtead of means of ſalvation. I beg you would inquire, whether ever you have been deeply ſenſible of the aggravated evil of ſin, the perfection of God's law, the ſtrictneſs of his juſtice, and the guilty imperfections of your own beſt works: whether ever you have ſeen the glory of God in the goſpel, and the excellency and ſufficiency of the righteouſneſs of Chriſt? Have you cheerfully embraced it with your whole ſouls? and do you lay the whole dependance of your ſalvation upon it? My brethren, how are your hearts affected towards the goſpel in this age of infidelity, when it is treated with ſneer and ridicule, and browbeaten with contempt and inſult? Do you glory in it, and venture your all upon it? Do you find it is the only relief for your wounded conſciences, the only cordial for your ſinking hearts? Do your whole ſouls embrace it with the tendereſt endearment, and tenaciouſly cling to it as the only *(tabula poſt naufragium)* plank to keep you from ſinking, after the general wreck of human nature? Do you reliſh its doctrines, even thoſe that are the moſt mortifying to your pride and vanity, and love to hear them honeſtly preached? Are the humble, deſpiſed doctrines of the croſs ſweet to you, and the very life of your ſouls? If you can give a comfortable anſwer to theſe inquiries, then,

II. This ſubject affords you abundant encouragement, and ſtrong conſolation. It is true, you can never think too humbly of yourſelves. You are as ſinful as you can poſſibly ſuppoſe yourſelves to be: your righteouſneſs is as inſufficient and imperfect, and you are as undeſerving of the favour of God as you can poſſibly imagine. But it is not to yourſelves that you look for a righteouſneſs, which will bear you out at the bar of your Judge: you have been obliged to give up that point for ever: you tried to ſtand upon your own footing as long as you could, but you found it would

would not do. And now your only refuge is the righteouſneſs of Chriſt by faith; here you reſt, and you look for ſalvation in no other way. My brethren, I would fain do honour to this righteouſneſs; but alas! the higheſt thing I can ſay of it is quite too low. It is indeed a righteouſneſs ſufficient for all the purpoſes for which you want it; it is a ſure, a tried foundation. Thouſands have built their hopes upon it, and it has never failed one of them yet: you may make the experiment with the ſame ſafety. There is not a charge which the law or juſtice, your own conſcience, or Satan the accuſer of the brethren, can bring againſt you, but what it can fully anſwer. Here then is ſafe footing, and let nothing drive you from it: and O give glory to God for ſo great a bleſſing!

SERMON LVII.

THE *SUCCESS* OF THE *MINISTRY* OF THE *GOSPEL*, OWING TO A *DIVINE INFLUENCE*. *

1 COR. iii. 7. *So then neither is he that plants any thing, neither he that waters; but God that gives the increaſe.*

THE deſign of God in all his works of creation, providence, and grace, is to advance and ſecure the glory of his own name; and therefore, though he makes uſe of ſecondary cauſes as the inſtruments of his operations, yet their efficacy depends upon his ſuperintending influence. It is his hand that ſuſtains the great chain of cauſes and effects, and his agency pervades and animates the worlds of nature and of grace. In

* Dated Hanover, November 29, 1752.

In the natural world, he makes uſe of the inſtrumentality of the huſbandman to till the ground, to ſow the ſeed, and water it. But it is he that commands the clouds to drop down fatneſs upon it, and the ſun to diffuſe its vital influence. It is he that continues to the earth, and the other principles of vegetation, their reſpective virtues; and without this influence of his the huſbandman's planting and watering would be in vain; and, after all his labour, he muſt acknowledge, that *it is God that giveth the increaſe.*

So in the world of grace, God uſes a variety of ſuitable means to form degenerate ſinners into his image, and fit them for a happy eternity. All the inſtitutions of the goſpel are intended for this purpoſe, and particularly the miniſtry of it. Miniſters are ſowers ſent out into the wild field of the world, with the precious ſeed of the word. It is the grand buſineſs of their life to cultivate this barren ſoil, to plant trees of righteouſneſs, and water them that they may bring forth the fruits of holineſs. It is by the uſe of painful induſtry that they can expect to improve this wilderneſs into a fruitful field; and the Lord is pleaſed to pour out his ſpirit from on high at times to render their labours ſucceſsful; ſo that they who *went forth bearing precious ſeed* with ſorrow and tears, return *bringing their ſheaves with joy.* But alas! they meet with diſappointments enough to convince them that all their labours will be in vain, if a ſovereign God deny the influences of his grace. The agency of his holy ſpirit is as neceſſary to fructify the word, and make it the ſeed of converſion, as the influences of heaven are to fructify the earth, and promote vegetation. A zealous Paul may plant the word, and an eloquent Apollos may water it; one may attempt to convert ſinners to chriſtianity, and the other to build them up in faith, but they are both nothing as to the ſucceſs of their labours, unleſs God gives the increaſe; that is, unleſs he affords the influence of his grace to render ther attempts ſucceſsful in begetting and cheriſhing

ing living religion in the hearts of men. This is the great truth contained in my text: *Neither is he that planteth any thing, nor he that watereth; but God that giveth the increaſe.*

The Corinthians had been bleſt with the labours of ſeveral miniſters, particularly of the apoſtle Paul, who had been the happy inſtrument of turning them from their native heatheniſm, and planting the goſpel among them, and of Apollos, who ſucceeded him, and watered the good ſeed he had planted among them. But the Corinthians, inſtead of peaceably and thankfully improving the different gifts of different miniſters for their ſpiritual and everlaſting benefit, fell into factions, through a partial admiration of the one, in oppoſition to the other. Some of them were for Paul, as an univerſal ſcholar, and a ſtrong reaſoner; others were all for Apollos, as an accompliſhed orator. And thus they conſidered theſe miniſters of Chriſt, rather as the ringleaders of factions than as unanimous promoters of the ſame catholic chriſtianity. To ſuppreſs this party ſpirit, the apoſtle aſks them, *Who then is Paul, or who is Apollos?* "What mighty beings would you make us in your idolatrous attachment to us? Alas! what are we more than feeble miniſters of Chriſt, by whom ye believed? We were not the authors of your faith, but the humble inſtruments of it in the divine hand; and the ſucceſs that either of us have had has not been from our own power, but juſt as God hath been pleaſed to give to every man (ver. 5.) I firſt planted the goſpel among you; Apollos afterwards watered it; this was all we could do: but we could not make it bear the fruits of holineſs in one ſoul. It was God alone that gave the increaſe, and made our reſpective labours ſucceſsful (ver. 6.) therefore turn your regard to him alone:—*Ceaſe from man, whoſe breath is in his noſtrils; for wherein is he to be accounted of?* Iſai ii. 22. "Do not idolatrouſly ſhare the honour of your converſion between God the efficient, and us, the humble inſtruments of it; but aſcribe

cribe it to him alone: for *neither is he that planteth any thing, nor he that watereth; but God that gave the increaſe;* "he is all in all."

When we ſee a people enjoy the frequent cultivations of the goſpel, and the means of ſpiritual fruitfulneſs, and yet few new trees of righteouſneſs planted, and thoſe, that have been planted, ſeemingly withering and unfruitful, we cannot but conclude that ſomething is wanting; without which all the means they enjoy will be of no ſervice. We ſhould naturally turn our thoughts to an inquiry, what was wanting, had we tilled our lands from year to year without a crop. And ſince we find at preſent, that notwithſtanding all the labours beſtowed upon us, we lie in a deep ſleep, and hardly know what it is of late to be animated with the news of ſome careleſs ſinner here and there awakened to ſerious concern about his eternal eſtate, it is high time to inquire what is wanting? There is certainly ſomething wanting, which is of greater conſequence than any thing we have. Here are the goſpel, and its ordinances, which at times have done great things; and ſinners have yielded to their reſiſtleſs energy: here is a miniſter, who, however weak, has ſometimes been the happy inſtrument of giving a ſinner an alarm, and ſpeaking a word in ſeaſon to thoſe that were weary: here are hearers that crowd our ſanctuary; hearers of the ſame kind with thoſe whom we have ſeen ere now fall under the power of the word. And what then is wanting? Why, God, that alone can give the increaſe, is not here by the influences of his grace; and in his abſence, *neither he that planteth is any thing, nor he that watereth;* they are all nothing together; and may labour till doomſday, and never convert one ſoul. *Where is the Lord God of Elijah?* Where is he that can do more execution with one feeble ſentence, than we can with a thouſand of our moſt powerful ſermons! Why, he hath hid his face; and hence *there is none that calleth upon his name, that ſtirreth up himſelf to take hold of him.* Iſai. lxiv.

lxiv. 7. And till the Spirit be poured upon us from on high, nothing but briars and thorns will come up among us. Chap. xxxii. 13, 15.

Let your thoughts, therefore, with eager attention now purſue me, while I am proving, illuſtrating, and making remarks pertinent to our caſe, from this affecting truth contained in the text, That the ſucceſs of the miniſtry of the goſpel with reſpect to ſaints and ſinners, entirely depends upon the concurring influences of divine grace; or, that, without the divine agency to render the goſpel ſucceſsful, all the labours of its miniſters will be in vain.

This truth can give us no ſurprize as a new diſcovery, if we have any acquaintance with the preſent degeneracy of human nature—with the declarations and promiſes of the word of God—with the accounts of the different ſucceſs of the means of grace in various periods of the church—or with matters that might have come within the compaſs of our own experience and obſervation.

I. Such is the preſent degeneracy of human nature, that all the miniſtrations of the goſpel cannot remedy it, without the concurring efficacy of divine grace.

So barren is the ſoil, that the ſeed of the word falls upon it and dies, and never grows up; as though it had never been ſown there, till it be fructified by divine grace. It is a ſoil fruitful of briars and thorns, which grow up, and choke the word; ſo that it becometh unfruitful till divine grace root them up. Or it may be repreſented by a rocky or ſtony ſoil, where the word of God can take no deep root, and therefore withers till it be molified by influences from heaven. Thus our Lord repreſents the matter in the famous parable of the ſower. Matt. xiii. 3, &c. 18, &c.

The metaphors uſed in ſacred ſcripture to illuſtrate this caſe, ſufficiently prove the degeneracy of mankind, and their entire oppoſition to the goſpel. They are repreſented as ſpiritually dead, Eph. ii. 1. John v. 25. that is, though they are ſtill capable of the exerciſes

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of reaſon and animal actions, yet they are really deſtitute of a ſupernatural principle of ſpiritual life, and incapable of ſuitable exerciſes towards God. And can a Paul or an Apollos quicken the dead with convictive arguments, with ſtrong perſuaſions, or tender and paſſionate expoſtulations? No; none but he can do it whoſe almighty voice bade Lazarus come forth. Sinners are alſo repreſented as blind. 2 Cor. iv. 4. Now what can feeble mortals do to ſuch? We can exhibit divine things before them; we can expoſe the horrid deformity of ſin, and its tremendous conſequences; we can diſplay the glories of God, the beauty of holineſs, and the allurements of redeeming love; but, alas! all this is but like expoſing colours to the blind. We cannot open their eyes; we cannot communicate ſuch views of things to their minds as are in any meaſure adequate to the things themſelves. What can tender arguments avail to break hearts of ſtone? What ſignifies reaſoning to govern headſtrong obſtinacy, which regards it no more than a whirlwind? What can perſuaſions do to extirpate inveterate, implacable enmity? Rom. viii. 7. What can the charms of eloquence do to charm deaf adders that ſtop their ears? Pſalm lviii. 4. The Iſraelites might as well pretend to overthrow the walls of Jericho with the ſound of rams-horns, as we with our feeble breath to overthrow the ſtrong holds of ſatan in the hearts of ſinners! It is the divine agency alone that gives the ſucceſs in both caſes. Clay cannot open the eyes of the blind, except in his almighty hands who could form a world out of nothing, and who can work without or againſt means as eaſily as with them.

The ſcripture-repreſentation of the degeneracy of mankind are confirmed by univerſal experience. If we form any obſervations of ourſelves or others, we find that the whole bent of our ſouls by nature is contrary to the goſpel. The goſpel is deſigned to reclaim men from ſin; but they are obſtinately ſet upon it: it is deſigned to make ſin bitter to them, and to diſſolve

their hearts into tender ſorrows for it; but we naturally delight in ſin, and our hearts are hard as the nether mill-ſtone: it is intended to bring apoſtate rebels back to God, and the univerſal practice of holineſs; but we love eſtrangement from him, and have no inclination to return. We abhor the ways of ſtrict holineſs, and chooſe to walk in the imaginations of our own hearts. The goſpel is calculated to advance the divine glory, and abaſh the pride of all fleſh, in the ſcheme of ſalvation it reveals; but this is directly contrary to the diſpoſition of the ſinner, who is all for his own glory. This requires no tedious arguments to prove it. Look in upon your own hearts; look back on your own conduct; look round you on the world; and there the evidences of it will glare upon you.

Now, ſince the innate diſpoſitions of men are thus averſe to the goſpel, it is evident that nothing but divine power can make it effectual for their ſanctification. Inſtructions may furniſh the head with notions, and correct ſpeculative miſtakes; but they have no power to ſway the will, and ſweetly allure it to holineſs.—Perſuaſions may prevail to bring men to practiſe what they had omitted through miſtake, careleſſneſs, or a tranſient diſlike; but they will have no effect where the heart is full of innate enmity againſt the things recommended. In this caſe, he that planteth and he that watereth is nothing; it is God alone can give the increaſe; as is more than intimated by,

II. The promiſes and declarations of the word, which appropriate all the ſucceſs of the goſpel to God alone.

Jehovah is not fond of oſtentation and parade, nor waſteful in throwing away his bleſſings where they are not needed; and therefore, if the means of grace were ſufficient of themſelves to convert ſinners and edify believers, he would not make ſuch magnificent promiſes of the ſupernatural aids of his grace, nor claim the efficacy of them as his own. He would not aſſert the inſufficiency of them without his influence, nor aſſign

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the withdrawment of his grace as one cauſe of their unſucceſsfulneſs. But all this he does in his word.

Notwithſtanding all the miraculous as well as ordinary means of grace which the Iſraelites enjoyed, there was need of this divine promiſe, *The Lord thy God will circumciſe thy heart, and the heart of thy ſeed, to love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy ſoul.* Deut. xxx. 6. And this promiſe was not peculiar to the Moſaic diſpenſation of the covenant of grace, which was leſs clear and efficacious; but we find that one ſuperior excellency of the goſpel-diſpenſation is, that it is more abundant in ſuch promiſes. It is to the goſpel-church that this promiſe is more particularly made; *Behold, the days come, ſaith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the houſe of Iſrael,* &c. *not according to the covenant which I made with their fathers, in the day that I took them by the hand, to bring them out of the land of Egypt,* &c. *But this is the covenant that I will make with them: I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts.* Jer. xxxi. 31, 33. Heb. viii. 8, &c.

This is a promiſe of ſo much importance, that it is frequently repeated with ſome circumſtantial alteration, as the very life of the New Teſtament church. *I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear me for ever; and I will put my fear in their hearts, that they ſhall not depart from me.* Jer. xxxii. 39, 40. Ezekiel echoes back the ſame language by the inſpiration of the ſame Spirit, *I will give them one heart; and I will put a new ſpirit within them; and I will take the ſtony heart out of their fleſh; and I will give them an heart of fleſh; and they ſhall walk in my ſtatutes, and keep mine ordinances, and do them.* Ezek. xi. 19, 20. See alſo chap. xxxvi. 26, 27.

What was the ſucceſs of St. Peter's ſermon (Acts ii.) in the converſion of 3000, but the accompliſhment of thoſe promiſes in Joel and Zechariah, *I will pour out my Spirit upon all fleſh.* (Joel ii. 28, 29.) *I will pour out upon the houſe of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jeruſalem,*

ſalem, the ſpirit of grace and of ſupplication, and they ſhall look, &c. Zech. xii. 10. Theſe promiſes were ſubſtantially renewed by Chriſt, to encourage the drooping apoſtles, John xvi. 8, 9, 10. *I will ſend the Spirit; and when he is come, he will convince the world*, &c. All their miraculous powers were not ſufficient for the conviction of mankind, without the agency of the divine Spirit; but by this, that promiſe of the Father to his Son was accompliſhed: *Thy people ſhall be willing in the day of thy power.* Pſalm cx. 3.

I might ſubjoin many other promiſes of the ſame kind; but theſe are ſufficient to ſhew the abſolute neceſſity of divine influence, or the utter inſufficiency of the beſt means without it. And what farther time might be allotted to this particular, I ſhall lay out upon this pertinent and uſeful remark, which, if rightly attended to, would rectify miſtakes, and remove many ſcruples and controverſies upon this point. The remark is this, That the promiſes of God to beſtow bleſſings upon us, do not render needleſs our moſt vigorous endeavours to obtain them; and, on the other hand, that our moſt vigorous endeavours do not ſuperſede the influences of the Spirit to work in us the diſpoſitions we are labouring after: or, That *that* may be conſiſtently enjoined upon us as a duty, which is promiſed by God free favour; and *vice verſa.* This may be illuſtrated by various inſtances. God commands us as ſtrictly to circumciſe the foreſkins of our hearts, to make ourſelves new hearts and new ſpirits (Jer. iv. 4.) and to cleanſe ourſelves from mortal pollution (Iſa. i. 16.) as if this were wholly our work, and he had no efficiency in it. In the mean time, he promiſes as abſolutely to circumciſe our hearts to love him, to give us new hearts, and to purge us from all our filthineſs, and from all our abominations, as though he performed all the work without our uſing means.—Now we are ſure theſe things are conſiſtent; for the ſacred oracles are not a heap of contradictions. And how does their conſiſtency appear? Why, thus: It is

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our duty to uſe the moſt vigorous endeavours to obtain theſe graces promiſed, becauſe it is only in the uſe of vigorous endeavours that we have reaſon to expect divine influences. And yet theſe endeavours of ours do not in the leaſt work thoſe graces in us, and therefore there is certainly as much need of the promiſed agency of divine grace to effect the work, as if we ſhould do nothing at all. Our utmoſt endeavours fall entirely ſhort of it, and do not entitle us to divine aſſiſtance; and this we muſt have an humble ſenſe of, before we can receive the accompliſhment of ſuch promiſes as the effect of free grace alone. But we ſhould continue in theſe endeavours, becauſe we have no reaſon to hope for the accompliſhment of the promiſes in a courſe of ſloth and negligence. This point may be illuſtrated by the conſiſtency of the uſe of means and the agency of providence in the natural world. God has peremptorily promiſed, *that while the earth remaineth, ſeed-time and harveſt ſhall not ceaſe.* Gen. viii. 22. But this promiſe does not render it needleſs for us to cultivate the earth; nor does all our cultivation render this promiſe needleſs: for all our labour would be in vain without the influence of divine providence; and this influence is to be expected only in the uſe of labour. Thus, in the moral world, the efficacy belongs to God, as much as if we made no uſe of means at all; and the moſt vigorous endeavours are as much our duty as if we could effect the work ourſelves, and he had no ſpecial hand in it. Were this remark attended to, it would guard us againſt the pernicious extremes of turning the grace of God into wantonneſs, and pleading it as an excuſe for our idleneſs; and of ſelf-righteouſneſs, and depending upon our own endeavours. In this guarded manner does St. Paul handle this point: *Work out your own ſalvation with fear and trembling; for it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do, of his good pleaſure.* Phil. ii. 12, 13. But to return: As we may infer the neceſſity of divine influences from the promiſes of God, ſo

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We may infer the ſame thing from the many paſſages of ſacred writ aſcribing the ſucceſs of the goſpel upon ſinners, and even upon believers, to the agency of divine grace. If even a well-diſpoſed Lydia gives a believing attention to the things ſpoken by St. Paul, it is, *becauſe the Lord hath opened her heart.* Acts xvi. 14. Thus the Philippians believed, becauſe, ſays the apoſtle, *to you it is given on the behalf of Chriſt to believe.* Phil. i. 29. Thus the Epheſians were ſpiritually alive, becauſe, ſays he, *you hath he quickened, who were dead in treſpaſſes and ſins.* Eph. ii. 1. Faith is not of ourſelves; but is expreſsly ſaid to be the gift of God. Eph. ii. 8. Nay, the implantation of faith is repreſented as an exploit of omnipotence, like that of the reſurrection of Chriſt. Hence the apoſtle prays, Eph. i. 19, 20. that the Epheſians might be made deeply ſenſible of the *exceeding greatneſs of his power to us-ward that believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Chriſt when he raiſed him from the dead.* Repentance is alſo the gift of God: Chriſt is exalted to beſtow it. Acts v. 31. When the Jewiſh Chriſtians heard of the ſucceſs of the goſpel among the Gentiles, they unanimouſly aſcribed it to God: *then hath God alſo to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life,* Acts xi. 18. and it is upon this encouragement that St. Paul recommends the uſe of proper means to reclaim the obſtinate: *if God, peradventure, will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth.* 2 Tim. ii. 25. Regeneration alſo, in which faith and repentance and other graces are implanted, is always aſcribed to God. If all things are made new, *all theſe things are of God.* 2 Cor. v. 17, 18. If while others reject Chriſt ſome receive him, and ſo are honoured with the privilege of becoming the ſons of God, it is not owing to themſelves, but to him. *They are born, not of blood, nor of the will of man, nor of the will of the fleſh, but of God.* John i. 11, 12, 13. He begets ſuch of his own ſovereign will by the word of truth, James i. 18. and every good and perfect gift with which they are endowed

ed is not from themſelves, but from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, who is the great origin of all moral excellency, as the ſun is of light. ver. 17. Hence this change is expreſſed by ſuch terms as denote the divine agency, and exclude that of the creature; as a new birth, John iii. 3. *a new creation*, 2 Cor. v. 17. Col. iii. 10. the workmanſhip of God *created in Chriſt Jeſus*, Eph. ii. 10. a reſurrection from the dead, John v. 25. Eph. ii. 1. Col. iii. 1. Now it is the greateſt abſurdity to ſpeak of a man's begetting, or creating himſelf, or raiſing himſelf from the dead. Thus we find that the firſt implantation of grace in the heart of a ſinner is entirely the work of God; and, leſt we ſhould ſuppoſe that, when it is once implanted, it can flouriſh and grow without the influence of heaven, we find that the progreſs of ſanctification in believers is aſcribed to God, as well as their firſt converſion. David was ſenſible, after all his attainments, that he could not run the way of God's commandments unleſs God ſhould enlarge his heart. Pſ. cxix. 32. All the hopes of Paul concerning his promiſing converts at Philippi depended upon his perſuaſion, that *he that had begun a good work in them, would perform it until the day of Chriſt.* Phil. i. 6. Nay, it was upon this he placed his own entire dependance. *We are not ſufficient of ourſelves*, ſays he, *to think any thing as of ourſelves, but our ſufficiency is of God.* 2 Cor. iii. 5. If I am faithful, it is "becauſe I have obtained mercy of the Lord to make me ſo." 1 Cor. vii. 25. *By the grace of God I am what I am; and if I have laboured more abundantly than others, it is not I, but the grace of God that was with me.* 1 Cor. xv. 10. *I can do all things through Chriſt that ſtrengtheneth me.* Phil. iv. 13. He was relieved under his deſpondencies by this anſwer, *My grace is ſufficient for thee, and my ſtrength is made perfect in weakneſs.* 2 Cor. xii. 9. This is more than intimated in his prayers for himſelf and others: for example, *May the God of peace make you perfect in every good work, to do his will; working in you that which*

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is well-pleaſing in his ſight, through Jeſus Chriſt! Heb. xiii. 21. And indeed all the prayers of the ſaints for the aids of divine grace imply the neceſſity of them; for they would not pray for ſuperfluities, or for what they already have in a ſufficient meaſure. It is the Spirit that helps our infirmities in prayer, and other exerciſes of devotion, Rom. viii. 24. and all our preparation for the heavenly ſtate and aſpirations after it, are of God. *He that hath wrought us for the ſelf-ſame thing is God.* 2 Cor. v. 5. In a word, *it is God that worketh all our works in us*, Iſa. xxvi. 12. *it is he that worketh in us both to will and to do, of his own good pleaſure.* Phil. ii. 13. Now the actual communication of divine influences, implies their neceſſity. Accordingly, we find

The neceſſity of divine influences is aſſerted in the plaineſt terms in ſcripture. *No man*, ſays Chriſt, *can come unto me, except the Father draw him.* John vi. 44. *He that hath heard and learned of the Father, and he only, will come to him*, ver. 45. and this influence is not purchaſed by our endeavours, but it is the free gift of grace. Hence Chriſt varies his former declarations into this form; *no man can come unto me, except it be given unto him of my Father;* ver. 65. and the agency of divine grace is neceſſary, not only to draw ſinners to Chriſt at firſt, but alſo to make them fruitful afterwards. Hence Chriſt repreſents even the apoſtles as dependant upon him as the branch upon the vine; and tells them plainly, that "without him they can do nothing." John xv. 4, 5. Through all the ſtages of the Chriſtian life, we depend entirely upon him; and without his influences, we ſhould wither and die like a blaſted flower, however blooming and fruitful we were before. Hence, ſays God to his people, *in me is thy fruit found.* Hoſea xiv. 8. Since then this is the caſe, it will follow, that when God is pleaſed to withhold his influences, all the means of grace will be unſucceſsful. Accordingly we find,

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The unſucceſsfulneſs of the goſpel is often reſolved into the withholding or withdrawing of the influences of grace, as one cauſe of it. Thus Moſes reſolves the obſtinacy of the Iſraelites under all the profuſion of wonders that had attended them, into this, as one cauſe of it: *The Lord hath not given you an heart to perceive, and eyes to ſee, and ears to hear, unto this day.* Deut. xxix. 2, 3, 4. If none believe the report of the goſpel, it is becauſe the arm of the Lord is not revealed. Iſa. liii. 1. "If the myſteries of the kingdom of heaven are hidden from the wiſe and prudent, while they are revealed to babes; it is becauſe God in his righteous judgment and ſovereign pleaſure, hides them from the one, and reveals them to the other." Matt. xi. 25, 26. Nay, the evangeliſt ſpeaks in yet more forcible terms, when ſpeaking of the unbelief of the Jews, who were witneſſes of Chriſt's convictive miracles and diſcourſes; *therefore they could not believe, becauſe that Eſaias ſaid, he hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their hearts,* John xii. 39, 40. and in the ſame ſtrain St. Paul ſpeaks: *he hath mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that ſheweth mercy.* Rom. ix. 18, &c. Theſe paſſages are ſo oppoſite to the prevailing divinity of the age, that they are dangerous weapons to meddle with; and it is well they are the very words of ſcripture, otherwiſe we ſhould be charged with blaſphemy for mentioning the truth contained in them. We muſt indeed be cautious that we do not infer from theſe ſcriptures any ſuch horrid doctrine as this, that men are compelled to ſin, and puſhed on to ruin, by a neceſſitating decree, or the reſiſtleſs impulſe of providence; or that, though they were diſpoſed to turn to God, they are judicially kept back and hindered by the divine hand. This would be contrary to the whole current of ſcripture, which charges the ſin and ruin of ſinners upon themſelves; but theſe paſſages mean, that God denies to obſtinate

ſinners thoſe influences of his grace which are neceſſary to convert them, and which, if communicated, would have ſubdued their utmoſt obſtinacy; and that in conſequence of this denial, they will ruſh on in ſin and irreclaimable impenitence, and periſh; but yet that God, in denying them his grace, does not act merely as an arbitrary ſovereign, but as a juſt judge, puniſhing them for their ſin in abuſing the bleſſings he has beſtowed upon them, by judicially withdrawing the aids of his grace, and withholding farther influences. And ſure he may puniſh obſtinate ſinners with privative as well as poſitive puniſhment! he may as juſtly withhold or withdraw forfeited bleſſings, as inflict poſitive miſery. This we all own he may do with reſpect to temporal bleſſings; he may juſtly deny them to ſuch as have forfeited them; and why he may not exerciſe the ſame ſovereignty and juſtice with regard to ſpiritual bleſſings, is hard to ſay. His hardening the heart, blinding the eyes, &c. of ſinners, ſignify his withdrawing the influences of grace which they have abuſed, his withholding thoſe additional influences which might irreſiſtibly ſubdue their obſtinacy, and his ſuffering them to fall into circumſtances of temptation. Theſe paſſages do but ſtrongly and emphatically expreſs thus much: thus much they may mean, without caſting any injurious reflections upon God; and leſs than this they cannot mean, unleſs we would explain away their meaning.

From the whole then, we find that the doctrine of the reality and neceſſity of divine influences to render the adminiſtrations of the goſpel effectual for ſaving purpoſes, is a doctrine familiar to the ſacred oracles. This will receive additional confirmation, if we find it agreeable to matter of fact: Which leads me to obſerve,

III. That the different ſucceſs of the ſame means of grace in different periods of the church, ſufficiently ſhews the neceſſity of gracious aſſiſtances to render them efficacious. The various ſtates of the church in

in various ages are but comments upon the ſacred pages, and accompliſhments of ſcripture.

Now we find that religion has flouriſhed or declined, not ſo much according to external means, as according to the degree of divine influence. Alas! what could Noah, that zealous preacher of righteouſneſs do, during the 120 years of his miniſtry? He might warn, he might perſuade, he might weep over a ſecure world, in vain: they would ruſh upon deſtruction before his eyes; and he could only perſuade his own family; and even among them there was a curſed Ham. How little could Moſes, the favourite meſſenger and intimate of God, prevail to make his people dutiful! Alas! after all the aſtoniſhing wonders he wrought before their eyes, they continued obſtinate and rebellious; *for the Lord had not given them an heart to underſtand*, &c. Deut. xxix. 4. This Moſes mentions as what was beyond his power, and could be effected by omnipotence only. What inconſiderable ſucceſs had that zealous prophet Elijah, the eloquent Iſaiah, or that tender-hearted, mourning, weeping prophet Jeremiah! Surely, many feeble ſervants of Chriſt, in all reſpects inferior to them, have been crowned with more extenſive ſucceſs! Nay, when the Son of God deſcended from heaven a teacher to the world, who ſpake as never man ſpake, who carried omnipotence along with him to atteſt his doctrine by the moſt aſtoniſhing miracles, how few, during his life, were brought ſeriouſly to regard his doctrine! He was pleaſed to defer the remarkable effuſion of his ſpirit till his return to his native heaven. And when it was poured out, what a glorious alteration followed! then Peter, a poor fiſherman, is the happy inſtrument of converting three thouſand with one ſhort ſermon; which is more perhaps than his divine Maſter had done by a hundred. Then, in ſpite of the united oppoſition of earth and hell, the humble doctrines of the croſs triumphed over the nations, and ſubdued millions to the obedience of faith.

Then

Then the doctrines of Jeſus, who was crucified at Jeruſalem like an infamous malefactor, between two thieves, became the mighty, all-conquering weapons, through God, to demoliſh the ſtrong-holds of Satan. 2 Cor. ii. 4. And whence this ſtrange alteration? It was from the more abundant effuſion of the Spirit upon the minds of men; upon their minds, I ſay; for as to the external evidences from miracles, prophecies, &c. they were ſufficiently clear before this happy ſeaſon. But there was not the ſame degree of internal illumination by the Spirit. It is often intimated by Chriſt, in his laſt diſcourſes with his diſciples, that the holy Spirit was not yet given; and hence it was that he and they laboured ſo much in vain. But upon his aſcenſion he performed the promiſe he had ſo often repeated, and ſent the Spirit both upon them and their hearers; and then the aſpect of affairs was happily altered: then the word had free courſe, and was glorified. Then the world, was *convinced of ſin, of righteouſneſs, and of judgment.*

This point might be illuſtrated farther by a hiſtory of the various periods of the church from the apoſtolic age to the preſent time; but it would be too tedious; and what has been offered is ſufficient to convince us that it is not by power, nor by might, but by the Spirit of the Lord of Hoſts, that the intereſts of religion are carried on, Zech. iv. 6. eſpecially if we add,

IV. Our own experience and obſervation, which furniſh us with many inſtances in which this great truth has been exemplified.

Our obſervation furniſhes us with ſuch inſtances as theſe:—Sometimes a miniſter who is an univerſal ſcholar, a maſterly reaſoner, and an accompliſhed orator, and withal ſincerely engaged for the converſion of ſinners, labours in vain, and all his excellent diſcourſes ſeem to have no effect; while another of much inferior accompliſhments is the ſucceſsful inſtrument of turning many to righteouſneſs. This cannot be accounted

accounted for without aſcribing the diſtinction to the peculiar concurrence of divine grace; for if it depended upon the inſtruments, it would be quite the reverſe. Sometimes a clear, convictive, and withal ſolemn and warm diſcourſe has no effect; while at another time the ſame doctrines, delivered in a weak, incoherent manner, have ſtrange efficacy, and reach the heart. Sometimes the reading of a ſermon has been the means of awakening careleſs ſinners, when at other times the moſt ſolemn and argumentative preaching has been in vain. Sometimes we have ſeen a number of ſinners thoroughly awakened, and brought to ſeek the Lord in earneſt; while another number under the very ſame ſermon, and who ſeemed as open to conviction as the former, or perhaps more ſo, have remained ſecure and thoughtleſs, as uſual. And whence could this difference ariſe but from ſpecial grace? We have ſeen perſons ſtruck to the heart with thoſe doctrines which they had heard an hundred times without any effect. And indeed there is ſomething in the manner of perſons being affected with the word, which ſhews that the impreſſion is not made by the word itſelf, or by any other power than divine. The truths that make ſuch deep impreſſions upon their hearts are no new diſcoveries; they are the old common repeated truths of the goſpel, which they had heard before a thouſand times; and the manner in which they are repreſented by the miniſter may not be clearer than uſual. But, to their ſurpriſe, theſe familiar doctrines flaſh upon them as new diſcoveries; they appear to them in a quite different light, as though they had never heard them before: and they reach the conſcience, and pierce the heart with ſuch amazing energy, that the ſinner is caſt into a conſternation at his own ſtupidity, that he never had ſuch apprehenſions of things before. He was wont to regard the word as a ſpeculation, or a pleaſing ſong, but now he finds it living and powerful, &c. the ſecrets of his heart are laid open by it,

and

and he is obliged to own that God is with it of a truth. Thus a believer alſo diſcerns the doctrines of the goſpel in a quite different light at one time than at another: he ſees new glories in them. Hence one ſermon leaves him cold and hard-hearted, while another, no better in itſelf, ſets him all on fire. Hence alſo one receives advantage from a diſcourſe which had no effect upon another: and from this proceeds the difference in judgment about the excellency of ſermons, which we may obſerve among Chriſtians. Every one forms a judgment according to his own ſenſations, and not according to the diſcourſe in itſelf. And indeed when we hear an exerciſed Chriſtian expatiate in praiſe of a diſcourſe, it is a happy ſign that it was made of ſpecial ſervice to him.

Many ſuch inſtances as theſe familiarly occur in the ſphere of our obſervation; which prove, by matters of fact, that the ſucceſs of the goſpel depends upon the influence of divine grace. But we need not look about us to obſerve others. Turn your eyes inward upon what has paſſed in your own minds, and you ſhall find, that

Your own experience proves the ſame thing.—Have you not found that the very ſame things have very different effects upon you at different times? Thoſe truths, which at one time leave you dull and ſleepy, at other times quicken all your powers to the moſt vigorous exerciſe. Sinners, do you not return from the houſe of God in very different frames, though the ſervice there has been ſubſtantially the ſame? At one time you ſweat and agonize under a ſenſe of guilt and make many reſolutions to change your courſe of life; and at another time there is a ſtupid calm within, and you matter not all the concerns of eternity. Some indeed have lain ſo long under the rays of the Sun of Righteouſneſs, that they are hardened, like clay, and hardly ſuſceptive of any deep impreſſions at any time, after they have murdered their conſcience, and ſilenced all its firſt remonſtrances.

ſtrances. Theſe may go on ſerene and placid, till the flames of hell give them ſenſation; and this is moſt likely to be their doom; though it is not impoſſible but that this goſpel, this ſtale, neglected goſpel, which now makes no impreſſion on their ſtony hearts, may yet be endowed with almighty power to break them into the tendereſt contrition: and I pray God this may be the happy event. I pray God, O ſinner, that thou mayeſt yet fall under the reſiſtleſs energy of thoſe important things which now appear but trifles to thee. But till perſons are thus become proof againſt the goſpel, they generally feel a variety of diſpoſitions under the miniſtry of it; and this variety is to be principally aſcribed to the various degrees of divine influence upon them at different ſeaſons. And you ſaints, you alſo experience a like viciſſitude. Sometimes, O how divinely ſweet, O how nouriſhing is the ſincere milk of the word! How does the word enlighten, quicken, and comfort you! How exactly it ſuits your very caſe! At other times it is taſteleſs; it is a dead letter, and has no effect upon you. At times a ſentence ſeems almighty, and carries all before it; and you feel it to be the word of God; at other times, you perceive only your feeble fellow-mortal ſpeaking to you, and all his words are but feeble breath; as different from the former as chaff from wheat. See Jer. xxiii. 28, 29. Your own memories can ſupply my deficiency under this head, by recollecting ſuch inſtances as theſe perhaps during your whole life; and the time urges me to make ſome remarks upon what has been ſaid. Theſe are ſo numerous and copious, that though I had them principally in view, and choſe this ſubject for the ſake of them, yet I can but ſuperficially touch upon them.

Hence we learn,

1. How eſſential and important the doctrine of divine influence is to the church of God. The very life, and the whole ſucceſs of the goſpel depend upon it. And ſince this neceſſarily ſuppoſes the utter depravity

pravity and ſpiritual impotence of human nature in its fallen ſtate, that doctrine alſo muſt be frequently and plainly inculcated.

Alas! the great defect of the ſyſtem of divinity too faſhionable in our days, and one great cauſe of the languiſhing ſtate of religion in our age, and of the prevalency of vice and impiety! Since it has been the mode to compliment mankind as able to do ſomething very conſiderable in religion, religion has died away. Since it has been the faſhion to preſs a reformation of mens lives, without inculcating the abſolute neceſſity of divine grace to renew their nature, there is hardly ſuch a thing as a thorough reformation to be ſeen; but mankind are evidently growing worſe and worſe. Since men think they can do ſomething, and ſcorn to be wholly dependant on divine grace, the Lord, as it were, looks on and ſuffers them to make the experiment; and, alas! it is like to be a coſtly experiment to multitudes. God withholds his influence in juſt diſpleaſure, and lets them try what mighty things the boaſted powers of degenerate nature can do without it; and hence, alas! they lie all ſecure and aſleep in ſin together. Sermons are preached; the houſe of God is frequented; the ordinances of the goſpel adminiſtered; yet vice is triumphant; carnal ſecurity almoſt univerſal; and ſo few are earneſtly ſeeking after religion, that one would hardly ſuſpect, from the ſucceſs, that theſe are intended as means to bring them to this. Thus, alas! it is around us if we believe our ſenſes: and thus it will continue to be, till miniſters and people are brought to the duſt before God, to acknowledge their own weakneſs, and entire dependance upon him.—Therefore, hence we learn,

2. That when we enjoy the miniſtrations of the goſpel in the greateſt purity and plenty, we ſhould not place our truſt upon them, but wholly depend on the influence of divine grace for the ſucceſs. We are apt to think, if we had but ſuch a miniſter among us,

us, how much good would be done! It is true, that faithful and accompliſhed miniſters are ſingular bleſſings to the places where they labour, becauſe it is by their inſtrumentality that the Lord is wont to work: but ſtill let us remember, that even a Paul or an Apollos is nothing, unleſs the Lord give the increaſe. One text of ſcripture, one ſentence will do more execution, when enforced by divine energy, than all the labours of the ableſt miniſters upon earth without it. For this divine energy therefore let us look; for this let us cry, *curſed be the man that truſteth in man*, &c. When we depend upon the inſtruments, we provoke the Spirit of God to leave us. If we are fond of taking miniſters in his ſtead, we ſhall make the trial, till they and we wither away for want of divine influences. This provokes the bleſſed Spirit to blaſt the gifts of his miniſters, to ſuffer them to fall, or to remove them out of the way, when they are ſet up as his rivals, that their idolaters may ſee they are but men. This provokes him to leave the hearers fruitleſs under the beſt cultivations, till experience ſadly convinces them that they can do nothing without him. Therefore let not miniſters truſt in their own abilities, nor people in their labours; but all in the Lord.

That we ſhould aſcribe all the ſucceſs of the goſpel to God alone, and not ſacrilegiouſly divide the honour of it between him and the inſtruments of it, or between him and ourſelves, the miniſters of Chriſt are ready to anſwer you, in the language of Peter, If we be examined of the good deed done to impotent ſinners, by what means they are made whole; be it known unto you, that by the name of Jeſus do they ſtand whole before you. Acts iv. 9, 10. Why do ye look ſo earneſtly upon us, as if by our own power or holineſs we had done this! chap. iii. 12. It is a very ſhocking compliment to them to be accounted the authors of your faith. Good miniſters love to be humble, to lie in their proper ſphere, and would have God to have all the glory, as the great efficient; and when

we aſcribe the work of God to the inſtrument, we provoke him to withdraw his influence, that we may be convinced of the miſtake. Let us alſo take care that we do not aſſume the honour of the work to ourſelves. Alas! we had no hand in it, but oppoſed it with all our might; and therefore, *not unto us*, &c. Pſ. cxv. 1. The Lord hath done great things for us in this place, for which we are glad. One can name one, and another another, as his ſpiritual father, or the helper of his faith; but ſtill remember, theſe only planted or watered; but it was God that gave the increaſe: and therefore to him alone aſcribe his own work.

3. Hence alſo we may learn, whither we ſhould look for grace to render the goſpel ſucceſsful among us. Let us look up to God. Saints, apply to him for his influences to quicken your graces, and animate you in your Chriſtian courſe. Sinners, cry to him for his grace to renew your nature and ſanctify you. Not all the men, nor all the means upon earth, can be of any ſervice to you without him. Carefully attend upon the goſpel, and all its inſtitutions; but ſtill be ſenſible, that theſe alone will not do; more is neceſſary; even the ſupernatural agency of divine grace.

How dangerous a thing it is to grieve the Spirit, and cauſe him to withdraw! In that curſed moment when a ſinner has quenched the Spirit, all the means of grace become uſeleſs to him. Our ſalvation depends entirely upon the divine agency; and therefore to forfeit this, is to cut ourſelves off from all hope. Let us then indulge every good motion, entertain every ſolemn thought, cheriſh every pious reſolution, and ſo, as it were, invite the bleſſed agent to accompliſh his work, inſtead of provoking him to leave us. Alas! how natural is it for mankind to reſiſt him! how averſe are they to indulge his motions, and ſubmit to his operations! And are not ſome of you guilty in this reſpect?

4. We

4. We obſerve that whatever excellent outward means and privileges a church enjoys, it is in a moſt miſerable condition, if the Lord has withdrawn his influences from it: and whether this be not too much our own condition, I leave you to judge. Some of you, I doubt not, are even now, when others are withering around you, flouriſhing in the courts of the Lord, and feel the dews of heaven upon you: ſuch I heartily congratulate. But in general, it is evident that a contagious lukewarmneſs and carnal ſecurity have ſpread themſelves among us. Matters would not be thus ſtill and quiet, if there was any conſiderable number of ſinners among us anxiouſly ſeeking after ſalvation. The violence of their concern would conſtrain them to unboſom themſelves to their miniſter, and to Chriſtians around them. Our public aſſemblies would not wear ſo ſtupid and unconcerned an aſpect, were they generally pricked to the heart. And what is the cauſe of this declenſion? Why, the Lord denies the increaſe: the Lord withholds his influence. This complaint is become faſhionable among us, and often upon our lips; but pray conſider what you ſay when you utter this complaint. And is the Lord indeed withdrawn from us? Then all is gone; then ſaints may languiſh, and ſinners may periſh; and there is no remedy. We may indeed have preaching, ſacraments, ſocieties, &c. but, alas! what will all theſe avail, if God deny the increaſe! they will not ſave one ſoul; nay, they will but aggravate our condemnation. Let ſinners take the alarm, and conſider how ſad their caſe is, who have outlived the ſeaſon of remarkable divine influences! The harveſt is paſt, the ſummer is ended, and you are not ſaved; and what do you think will become of you? How poor a chance, if I may ſo ſpeak, have you for life, when the ſpirit is thus reſtrained! You hardly know one careleſs ſinner, in the compaſs of your knowledge, that has been made ſeriouſly religious, within theſe two or three years. If men were preſſing into the kingdom

kingdom of heaven, you might be helped forward, as it were, in the crowd; but now all lies as a dead weight againſt you, and is it not time for you to cry mightily to God that he would pour out his ſpirit upon you!

SERMON LVIII.

THE REJECTION OF *GOSPEL-LIGHT* THE CONDEMNATION OF MEN.

JOHN iii. 19. *And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkneſs rather than light; becauſe* [or *for*] *their deeds are evil.*

WHAT a ſtrange, alarming declaration is this! *Light is come into the world:* the Sun of Righteouſneſs is riſen upon this region of darkneſs; therefore it is enlightened; therefore it is bright intellectual day with all its rational inhabitants; therefore they will no longer grope and ſtumble in darkneſs, but all find their way into the world of eternal light and glory. Theſe would be natural inferences: this event we would be apt to expect from the entrance of light into the world. But hear and tremble, ye inhabitants of the enlightened parts of the earth! hear and tremble, ye ſons of Naſſau-Hall, and inhabitants of Princeton! The benevolent Jeſus, the Friend of human nature, the Saviour of men, whoſe lips never dropped an over-ſevere word, or gave a falſe alarm; Jeſus himſelf proclaims, *This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world,* &c.

This

This is the condemnation; that is, This is the great occaſion of more aggravated condemnation at the final judgment, and of more ſevere and terrible puniſhment in the eternal world; or, this is the cauſe of mens condemning themſelves even now at the bar of their own conſciences.

That light is come into the world—Jeſus, the Sun of the moral world, is riſen, and darts his beams around him in the goſpel. And this furniſhes guilty minds with materials for ſelf-condemnation; and their obſtinate reſiſtance of the light enhances their guilt, and will render their condemnation the more aggravated; and the reaſon is, that

Men love darkneſs rather than light. They chooſe ignorance rather than knowledge! The Sun of Righteouſneſs is not agreeable to them, but ſhines as a baleful, ill-boding luminary. If they did but love the light, its entrance into the world would be their ſalvation; but now it is their condemnation. But why do they hate the light? Truly, light is ſweet, and it is a pleaſant thing to the eyes to ſee the ſun: and no light ſo ſweet as this from heaven: no ſun ſo bright and reviving as the Sun of Righteouſneſs: and why then do they not love it? Alas! there is no reaſon for it, but this wretched one,

Becauſe their deeds are evil. And evil deeds always excite uneaſineſs in the light, and afford the conſcience matter of ſelf-accuſation, therefore they wrap up themſelves in darkneſs, and avoid the painful diſcoveries of the light.

The text directs us to the following inquiries:

What is that light which is come into the world? What is the darkneſs that is oppoſed to it? What are the evidences of mens loving darkneſs rather than light? What is the reaſon of it? And in what reſpects the light's coming into the world, and mens loving darkneſs rather than light, is their condemnation?

I. What is that light which is come into the world?

The

The anſwer to this, and the other queſtions, I ſhall endeavour to accommodate to our own times and circumſtances, that we may the more readily apply it to ourſelves.

The light of Reaſon entered our world as ſoon as the ſoul of man was created; and, though it is greatly obſcured by the grand apoſtacy, yet ſome ſparks of it ſtill remain.

To ſupply its defects, the light of Revelation ſoon darted its beams through the clouds of ignorance, which involved the human mind, on its flying off to ſo great a diſtance from the Father of lights. This heavenly day began feebly to dawn upon the firſt pair of ſinners, in that early promiſe concerning *the ſeed of the woman;* and it grew brighter and brighter in the ſucceſſive revelations made to the patriarchs, to Moſes, and the prophets, till at length the Meſſiah appeared, as an illuſtrious ſun after a gradual, tedious twilight of the opening dawn.

The light of human literature has alſo come into the world, and ſhines with unuſual ſplendors upon our age and nation; and lo! it illuminates this little village, and extends its beams through the land.

But it is not light in any of theſe ſenſes that our Lord principally intends, but himſelf and his bleſſed goſpel; a more clear and divine light than any of the former.

He often repreſents himſelf under the ſtrong and agreeable metaphor of light. *I am the light of the world*, ſays he: *he that followeth me ſhall not walk in darkneſs.* John viii. 12. *I am come a light into the world, that whoſoever believeth in me, ſhould not abide in darkneſs.* John xii. 46. Light is a ſtrong and beautiful metaphor for knowledge, proſperity, comfort, and happineſs; and theſe are the rays which the bleſſed Jeſus diffuſes around him:—but, wherever he does not ſhine, all is ſullen and diſmal darkneſs. Hell is *the blackneſs of darkneſs for ever*, becauſe he does not extend to it the light of his countenance. That country

try where he does not ſhine, is *the land of darkneſs and the ſhadow of death;* and that heart which is not illuminated with *the light of the knowledge of his glory*, is the gloomy dungeon of infernal ſpirits; but wherever he ſhines, there is intellectual day, the bright meridian of glory and bleſſedneſs.

His goſpel alſo is frequently repreſented as a great light; and no metaphor was ever uſed with more emphaſis and propriety. It is the medium through which we diſcover the glory of the Deity, the beauties of holineſs, the evil of ſin, and the reality and infinite importance of eternal, inviſible things. This is the light that reveals the ſecrets of the heart, and diſcovers ourſelves to ourſelves. It is this that gives us a juſt and full view of our duty to God and man, which is but imperfectly or falſly repreſented in every other ſyſtem of religion and morality in the world. It is this that diſcovers and aſcertains a method in which rebels may be reconciled to their offended Sovereign, and exhibits a Saviour in full view to periſhing ſinners. Hail! ſacred heaven-born light! welcome to our eyes, thou brighteſt and faireſt effulgence of the divine perfections! May *this day-ſpring from on high*, viſit all the regions of this benighted world, and overwhelm it as with a deluge of celeſtial light! Bleſſed be God, its vital rays have reached to us in theſe ends of the earth: and if any of us remain ignorant of the important diſcoveries it makes, it is *becauſe we love darkneſs rather than light!* Which leads me to inquire,

II. What is that darkneſs that is oppoſed to this heavenly light?

Darkneſs is a word of gloomy import; and there is hardly any thing diſmal or deſtructive, but what is expreſſed by it in ſacred language. But the preciſe ſenſe of the word in my text, is, a ſtate of ignorance, and the abſence of the means of conviction. *Men love darkneſs rather than light;* that is, they chooſe to be ignorant, rather than well-informed:

ignorant

ignorant particularly of ſuch things as will give them uneaſineſs to know; as their ſin, and the danger to which it expoſes them. They are wilfully ignorant: and hence they hate the means that would alarm them with the mortifying diſcovery. They would rather be flattered than told the honeſt truth, and know their own character and condition; and hence they ſhut their eyes againſt the light of the goſpel, that would flaſh the painful conviction upon them. Tho' the light of the goſpel ſhines round you, yet are not ſome of you involved in this darkneſs? This you may know by the next inquiry.

III. What are the evidences of mens loving darkneſs rather than light?

The general evidence, which comprehends all the reſt, is their avoiding the means of conviction, and uſing all the artifices in their power to render them ineffectual.

It is not impoſſible to characterize ſuch of you as *love darkneſs rather than light*, though you may be ſo much upon your guard againſt the diſcovery, as not to perceive your own character.

Though you may have a turn for ſpeculation, and perhaps delight in every other branch of knowledge, yet the knowledge of yourſelves, the knowledge of diſagreeable duties, the diſcovery of your ſin and danger, of your miſerable condition as under the condemnation of the divine law, this kind of ſelf-knowledge you carefully ſhun; and, when it irreſiſtibly flaſhes upon you, you endeavour to ſhut up all the avenues of your mind, through which it might break upon you, and you avoid thoſe means of conviction, from which it proceeds.

You ſet yourſelves upon an attempt very prepoſterous and abſurd in a rational being, and that is, Not to think. When the ill-boding ſurmiſe riſes within, "All is not well: I am not prepared for the eternal world: if I ſhould die in this condition I am undone for ever:" I ſay, when conſcience thus whiſpers

pers your doom, it may make you ſad and penſive for a minute or two, but you ſoon forget it: you deſignedly labour to caſt it out of your thoughts, and to recover your former negligent ſerenity. The light of conviction is a painful glare to a guilty eye; and you wrap up yourſelves in darkneſs, leſt it ſhould break in upon you.

When your thoughts are like to fix upon this ungrateful ſubject, do you not labour to divert them into another channel? You immerſe yourſelves in buſineſs, you mingle in company, you indulge and cheriſh a thoughtleſs levity of mind, you break out of retirement into the wide world, that theatre of folly, trifling, and diſſipation; and all this to ſcatter the gloom of conviction that hangs over your ill-boding minds, and ſilence the clamours of an exaſperated conſcience! You laugh, or talk, or work, or ſtudy away theſe fits of ſerioufneſs! You endeavour to prejudice yourſelves againſt them by giving them ill names; as Melancholy, Spleen, and I know not what! whereas they are indeed the honeſt ſtruggles of an oppreſſed conſcience to obtain a fair hearing, and give you faithful warning of approaching ruin: they are the benevolent efforts of the Spirit of grace to ſave a loſt ſoul. And O! it would be happy for you if you had yielded to them, and cheriſhed the ſerious hour!

For the ſame reaſon alſo, you love a ſoft repreſentation of chriſtianity, as an eaſy, indolent, inactive thing; requiring no vigorous exertion, and attended with no dubious conflict, but encouraging your hopes of heaven in a courſe of ſloth, careleſſneſs, and indulgence. Thoſe are the favourite ſermons and favourite books which flatter you with ſmooth things, putting the moſt favourable conſtruction upon your wickedneſs, and repreſenting the way to heaven as ſmooth and eaſy.

Or if you have an unaccountable fondneſs for faithful and alarming preaching, as it muſt be owned ſome

ſelf-flatterers have, it is not with a view to apply it to yourſelves, but to others. If you love the light, it is not that you may ſee yourſelves, but other objects: and, whenever it forces upon you a glance of yourſelves, you immediately turn from it, and hate it.

Hatred of the light, perhaps, is the reaſon why ſo many among us are ſo impatient of public worſhip; ſo fond of their own homes on the ſacred hours conſecrated to divine ſervice; and ſo reluctant, ſo late, or ſo inconſtant in their attendance. It is darkneſs perhaps, at home; but the houſe of God is filled with light, which they do not love.

This alſo is one reaſon why the converſation of zealous communicative chriſtians, who are not aſhamed to talk of what lies neareſt their hearts, I mean their Religion, their Saviour, and their God, and to expreſs an abhorrence of what they ſo ſincerely hate, I mean the vices of mankind, and every appearance of evil; I ſay, this is one reaſon why their converſation is ſuch a heavy burden, ſuch a painful reſtraint to many. Such men reflect the beams of the Sun of Righteouſneſs, and the beauties of holineſs all around them:—they carry light with them whitherſoever they go, and ſtrike conviction to the guilty. The ſtrictneſs, the warm devotion and ſpirituality of their lives paſs a ſentence of condemnation upon ſinners; a ſentence which they cannot but feel, and which therefore renders them uneaſy. Hence it is that ſuch lively and circumſpect chriſtians are not at all popular in the world; but the favourites of the world are your pliable, temporizing, complaiſant chriſtians, that never carry their religion with them into polite company, but conform themſelves to the taſte of thoſe they converſe with. Theſe give no man's conſcience uneaſineſs, they reflect no heavenly light, but thicken the darkneſs of every company in which they appear; therefore they are acceptable to the lovers of darkneſs.

Another

Another expedient that has been often uſed, and which ſome of you perhaps have attempted, to avoid the light, is, to endeavour to work up yourſelves to a diſbelief of the chriſtian revelation. If you could baniſh that heavenly light out of the world, or ſubſtitute darkneſs in its place, then you might perpetrate the works of darkneſs with more confidence and licentiouſneſs. Therefore you eagerly liſten to the laughs, the jeers, the railleries and ſophiſms of looſe wits againſt it; and you are afraid to give a fair hearing to the many ſatisfactory evidences in its favour. Thus you cheriſh that hideous monſter, Infidelity; your own offspring, not Satan's, though the father of lies; for he *believes and trembles.* James ii. 19.

Theſe artifices and the like, are the effects, and conſequently the evidences and indications of mens loving darkneſs rather than light. And, inſtead of a larger illuſtration, I ſhall conclude this head with a plain honeſt appeal to my hearers.

As in the preſence of the heart-ſearching God, I ſolemnly appeal to your conſciences, whether you do not deal partially with yourſelves, and refuſe purſuing thoſe hints of your dangerous condition till you make a full diſcovery? Do not your hearts ſmite you, becauſe you have ſuppreſſed evidence, when it was againſt you, and ſhut your eyes againſt conviction? When the glaſs of the divine law has been held up before you, and ſhewn you your own hideous image, have you not gone away, and ſoon *forgot what manner of men you were?* Do you not know in your conſciences, that the hopes you entertain of future happineſs are not the reſult of ſevere repeated trial, but, on the other hand, owe their ſtrength and even their being to a ſuperficial examination, or none at all, to blind ſelf-flattery and exceſſive ſelf-love, which tempt you to believe things as you would have them? Is it cenſoriouſneſs, or is it evidence and faithfulneſs, that conſtrains me to cry out, O! how rare are well-grounded, well-atteſted hopes among us! Hopes that have

have not been ſlightly entertained, nor retained without good evidence, after impartial repeated trials; hopes that have riſen and fallen, gathered ſtrength or languiſhed, been embraced or abandoned, perhaps a thouſand times, according to the various degrees of evidence; and after a ſeries of ſuch viciſſitudes, attended with a variety of correſpondent paſſions, of joys and fears, of diſcouraging anxieties and tranſporting proſpects, have at length arrived at a ſettled, confirmed ſtate, ſupported by that only ſufficient proof, conſpicuous holineſs of heart and life. For the deciſion of this important doubt, I appeal from my own judgment, from the judgment of a cenſorious ſpirit and a blind charity, from every judgment but that of your own heart: at that tribunal I lodge the appeal; and there I inſiſt the matter ſhould be tried. And remember this, *If your hearts condemn you*, much more does God, the ſupreme Judge: for *he is greater than your hearts, and knoweth all things*; knoweth many cauſes of condemnation, unknown and perhaps unſuſpected by you. But, *brethren, if your hearts condemn you not, then you have confidence towards God.* 1 John iii. 20, 21. I proceed to inquire,

IV. What is the reaſon of this abſurd preference, that *men love darkneſs rather than light?*

The melancholy reaſon of this is eaſily diſcovered, and has been partly anticipated; and it is this, that men love eaſe and ſecurity of mind, rather than fear and anxiety. They are really obnoxious ſinners, under the terrible diſpleaſure of almighty God, and on the ſlippery brink of everlaſting deſtruction. Now to have a full conviction of this would alarm their fears, imbitter their pleaſures, damp their eager purſuits, and caſt their minds into a ferment of anxiety and terror. But to be blind to all theſe miſerable proſpects, to be elated with ſanguine expectations of the contrary, to have all ſerene and calm within, to be charmed with all the fine chimeras of flattering imagination; to be fearleſs of danger, and pleaſed with

with themſelves; this is a ſtate they naturally delight in: in this ſtate they will lull themſelves aſleep at all adventures, regardleſs of the conſequence; and as darkneſs is the moſt proper attendant of ſleep, therefore they chooſe it. But the light of the goſpel let into the conſcience would give them quite another view of things, would overturn all their towering hopes, and ſet the terrors of the Lord in array againſt them; would open ſuch ſhocking proſpects in the ways of ſin, that they could no longer dare to walk in them; would conſtrain them to indulge the ſorrows of a broken heart, and to long, and pant, and look, and cry for a Saviour. This would be a very painful exerciſe to them; and therefore they hate and ſhun the light, which would force the unwelcome conviction upon them.

This is the reaſon which Chriſt himſelf aſſigns for ſome mens loving darkneſs rather than light. *Every one that doth the truth cometh unto the light, that his deeds may be made manifeſt, that they are wrought in God.* Such a one is willing to be ſearched: the preſumption is in his favour, and the trial will turn out to his honour. *But he that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh he to the light, leſt his evil deeds ſhould be reproved.* John iii. 20, 21. It is the fear of this reproof that makes him afraid of the light; for he cannot but be conſcious that his evil deeds deſerve it: and to be thus reproved will yield him pain.

"But ſince they have ſuch favourable thoughts of themſelves, and entertain ſuch high hopes, why are they afraid of the light? muſt they not rather preſume its diſcoveries will be in their favour? And if ſo, why do they hate it?" I anſwer, that, notwithſtanding all their high ſentiments of themſelves, they have often a ſecret ſuſpicion they are not well grounded, and that the light would make ſome terrible diſcoveries concerning them; and hence they will not venture to truſt themſelves in the light, leſt their ſecret ſuſpicion ſhould be confirmed, and riſe into a full

full conviction. It is really ſo evident that they are guilty, unholy creatures, unfit for heaven, and their conſciences ſometimes give them ſuch hints of this alarming ſecret, that they cannot keep themſelves altogether ignorant of it. They therefore try to evade the trial, leſt the ſentence ſhould go againſt them. I appeal to your own breaſts, my brethren, whether this be not the true reaſon why you are ſo unwilling to examine yourſelves, and ſubmit to the ſevere ſcrutiny of the light of revelation? why you are averſe to ſelf-knowledge, and the means that would obtrude it upon you? Is it not becauſe you cannot but prejudge the matter even againſt yourſelves, in ſpite of all the arts of ſelf-flattery? And if there are ſuch ſtrong preſumptions againſt you, that even yourſelves cannot but dread a trial at the tribunal of your conſciences, is it not evident, that choſen darkneſs is your only guard againſt conviction, and that your caſe is really bad? And if ſo, how ſorry a relief is it to avoid the diſcovery! ſince all your prepoſterous care to avoid it will but aggravate your condemnation! Which naturally introduces the laſt inquiry:

V. In what reſpects the light's coming into the world, and mens loving darkneſs rather than light, is their condemnation?

Here I have only to illuſtrate two particulars already hinted; that this furniſhes them with matter for ſelf-condemnation now, and will be the occaſion of their more aggravated condemnation in the eternal world.

I. This furniſhes them with matter of ſelf-condemnation in the preſent ſtate. It is hard, perhaps impoſſible, for ſinners under the meridian light of the goſpel, to avoid all conviction of their guilt and danger. That light is very penetrating, and will dart its rays through the thickeſt glooms of ignorance: *It is vital and powerful, ſharper than a two-edged ſword; piercing and dividing aſunder the ſoul and ſpirit, the joints and marrow; and is a diſcerner of the thoughts and*

and intents of the heart. Heb. iv. 12. Such of you, my brethren, as are reſolved to ſhun the mortification of ſelf-knowledge, live in a ſituation very unfavourable to your deſign. You have had "burning and ſhining lights" among you; * who, I doubt not, *ſhine as the ſun, and as the ſtars in the firmament for ever and ever;* but, when they are tranſlated to a higher ſphere, the goſpel has not left you, but ſtill ſhines around you; and you will find it very difficult, I hope, impoſſible, to wrap up yourſelves in Egyptian darkneſs in ſuch a Goſhen, ſuch a land of viſion. In Tartary or Japan, or ſome ſavage region of darkneſs, you might have lived in contented ignorance, and avoided thoſe unacceptable glares of light which now will break in upon you, in ſpite of all your vigilance; for under the faithful and ſolemn preaching of the goſpel, your conſciences will often be diſturbed, and you will find yourſelves unable to go on in ſin bold and intrepid. And though in the thoughtleſs gaiety of health, and the hurry and din of buſineſs, you may drown the clamours of conſcience, yet in a retired hour, upon a ſick bed, and in the near views of death and eternity, conſcience will ſpeak, and conſtrain you to hear: and thus you will live unhappy, ſelf-codemned creatures in this world, till you are condemned by the righteous ſentence of God in the world to come. Therefore conſider,

II. Your loving darkneſs rather than light, will occaſion your more aggravated condemnation in the eternal world. It was in your power to receive warning, and diſcover your danger in time; nay, it coſt you ſome pains to avoid the diſcovery, and make light of the warning. And what a fruitful ſource of ſelf-tormenting reflections will this be! How will you fret, and vex, and accuſe, and condemn yourſelves, for acting ſo fooliſh a part! How will you exhauſt and ſpend yourſelves in eager, fruitleſs wiſhes, that

* Mr. Burr and Mr. Edwards, Preſidents of the College at Naſſau-Hall, before Mr. Davies.

that you had admitted conviction while the danger was avoidable! But, O! it will then be too late! Hell is a region of darkneſs too, but not of that ſoothing, peaceful darkneſs of ignorance, which you now prefer to the light of the goſpel, but a lowering, tremendous, tormenting darkneſs, that will for ever hide every bright and pleaſing proſpect from your eyes, and yet be the proper medium for diſcovering ſights of woe and terror: a thick darkneſs, occaſioned by the everlaſting eclipſe of the Sun of Righteouſneſs and the light of God's countenance, who will never dart one ray of comfort or of hope through the ſullen gloom. In this blackneſs of darkneſs you muſt dwell for ever, who now love darkneſs rather than light. And O! how will your conſciences haunt and terrify you, in that cheerleſs and ſtormy night! Your guilt will alſo appear great in the ſight of God, as well as to your own conſciences, and therefore he will inflict the greater puniſhment upon you. You have deſpiſed the richeſt bleſſings that even infinite goodneſs could beſtow upon the children of men; I mean, his Goſpel and his Son: you have made light of his authority in the moſt open and audacious manner. He knows you were even afraid to diſcover your duty towards him; he knows you would not regard your own conſciences when they were his advocates, and that you were unwilling to admit ſo much conviction as would render you ſorry for your offences againſt him. Nay, he knows that your being convinced that this or that was an offence againſt Him was no reſtraint to you from the commiſſion of it. In ſhort, he knows you ſpent your lives either in ſinning againſt knowledge, or in avoiding that knowledge which would have prevented your ſinning.—And while he views you in this light, what obſtinate, wilful, daring offenders muſt you appear in his eyes? And what aggravated puniſhment muſt he judge your due! He alſo knows you reluctated and ſtruggled againſt your own ſalvation, and hated that light which

which would have ſhewn you the way to everlaſting life. And muſt he not think you worthy of that deſtruction you have voluntarily choſen, and refuſe you admittance to that happineſs which you wilfully refuſed?

This is the repreſentation which the ſcriptures uniformly give us of the doom of ſuch as love darkneſs rather than light. *If I had not come and ſpoken to them*, ſays the bleſſed Jeſus, *they would not have had ſin; but now they have no cloak for their ſin.* John xv. 22. *It ſhall be more tolerable in the day of judgment for Sodom and Gomorrah, for Tyre and Sidon*, though moſt notorious for all manner of wickedneſs and debauchery, *than for Chorazin, Bethſaida and Capernaum*, in which Chriſt's mighty works were done, and the light of his goſpel ſhone ſo bright. Matt. xi. 21, 24. And this is agreeable to the eternal rules of righteouſneſs, that much ſhould be required where much has been given; and that the degree of guilt ſhould be eſtimated by the degrees of obligation and advantages for obedience.

And now, my dear hearers, upon a review of this ſubject, you ſee your own circumſtances; the light is come among you; it ſhines all around you; and, I doubt not but at times it finds ſome openings thro' which it forces its way even into unwilling minds. You have light to diſtinguiſh between truth and error; between ſin and duty; between the way to heaven, and the way to hell: you are warned, admoniſhed and inſtructed: you have the ſtrongeſt inducements to a life of religion, and the ſtrongeſt diſſuaſives from a courſe of ſin. I leave you therefore to determine what your guilt and puniſhment muſt be if you chooſe darkneſs rather than light; light ſo clear, ſo reviving, ſo ſalutary, ſo divine!

This alarming ſubject is very pertinent to us all, and we ſhould all apply it to ourſelves; but it is ſo peculiarly adapted to the reſidents of this houſe, that I cannot but direct my addreſs particularly to you,

my dear pupils, who are the children of the light in more reſpects than one.

There is not one in a thouſand of the ſons of men that enjoys your advantages. Light, human and divine, natural and ſupernatural, ancient and modern; that is, Knowledge of every kind ſhines upon you, and you are every day baſking under its rays. You have nothing to do but to poliſh your minds, and, as it were, render them luminous. But let me put you in mind, that unleſs you admit the light of the glorious goſpel of Chriſt to ſhine in your hearts, you will ſtill be the children of darkneſs, and confined in the blackneſs of darkneſs for ever. This is intolerably ſhocking, even in ſuppoſition. Suppoſe any of you ſhould be ſurrounded with more light than others, for no other purpoſe but that you may have a ſtronger conflict with conviction, and that your conſciences may with greater force raiſe tumults and inſurrections within you; ſuppoſe your ſins ſhould be the ſins of men of learning and knowledge, the moſt daring and gigantic ſins on this ſide hell; ſuppoſe you ſhould turn out ſinners of great parts, fine geniuſes, like the fallen angels, thoſe vaſt intellects; wiſe, but wicked; wiſe to do evil, but without knowledge to do good; ſuppoſe it ſhould be your higheſt character that you can harangue well, that you know a few dead languages, that you have paſſed through a courſe of philoſophy; but as to that knowledge which ſanctifies all the reſt, and renders them uſeful to yourſelves or others; that knowledge which alone can make you wiſe to ſalvation, and guide you to avoid the paths of deſtruction, you ſhun it, you hate it, and chooſe to remain contentedly ignorant in this important reſpect; ſuppoſe your parents, who have been at the expence of your education; your friends, who have entertained ſuch high and pleaſing expectations concerning you; church and ſtate, that look to you for help, and depend upon you to fill ſtations of importance in the world, and your careful inſtructors,

tors, who obſerve your growing improvements with proportional pleaſure;—ſuppoſe, that after all this generous labour, and all theſe pleaſing proſpects, they ſhould ſee you at laſt doomed to everlaſting darkneſs, for your voluntary abuſe of the light you now enjoy;—ſuppoſe theſe things, and——but the conſequences of theſe ſuppoſitions are ſo terrible, that I am not hardy enough to mention them. And, O! ſhall they ever become matters of fact!

Therefore, my dear youth, admit the light, love it, and purſue it, though at firſt it ſhould make ſuch diſcoveries as may be painful to you; for the pain will prove medicinal. By diſcovering your danger in time, you may be able to eſcape it; but never expect to remove it by the ſilly expedient of ſhutting your eyes. Be impartial inquirers after truth as to yourſelves, as well as other things, and no longer attempt to put a cheat upon yourſelves. Alas! how childiſh and fooliſh, as well as wicked and ruinous, would ſuch an impoſture be! The goſpel, in this particular, only requires you to be honeſt men; and ſurely this is a moſt moderate and reaſonable demand. Therefore, be ye *children of the light, and of the day*, and walk as ſuch, and then it will be a bleſſing to the world and to yourſelves, that ever you were born.

Finally, Let us all remember the terror of this friendly warning, *That this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men love darkneſs rather than light, becauſe their deeds are evil.*

SERMON

SERMON LIX.

A NEW-YEAR'S GIFT.

ROM. xii. 11. *And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of ſleep; for now is our ſalvation nearer than when we believed.**

TIME, like an ever-running ſtream, is perpetually gliding on, and hurrying us and all the ſons of men into the boundleſs ocean of eternity. We are now entering upon one of thoſe imaginary lines of diviſion, which men have drawn to meaſure out time for their own conveniency; and, while we ſtand upon the threſhold of a new year, it becomes us to make a ſolemn contemplative pauſe; though time can make no pauſe, but ruſhes on with its uſual velocity. Let us take ſome ſuitable reviews and proſpects of time paſt and future, and indulge ſuch reflections as our tranſition from year to year naturally tends to ſuggeſt.

The grand and leading reflection is that in the text, with which I preſent you as a New-Year's Gift; *Knowing the time, that it is now high time to awake out of ſleep.*

The connection of our text is this:—The apoſtle having enjoined ſundry duties of religion and morality, ſubjoins this conſideration, namely, that the time remarkably required them; as if he ſhould ſay, Be ſubject to magiſtrates, and love one another, and that the rather, knowing the time, that it is now high time, or the proper hour, † to awake out of ſleep. A ſleepy

* This Sermon is dated Naſſau-Hall, Jan. 1, 1760.

ſleepy negligence as to theſe things is peculiarly unſeaſonable at ſuch a time as this.

The Romans, to whom this epiſtle was written, were chriſtians indeed, in the judgment of charity: they were ſuch, whoſe ſalvation the apoſtle could point at as near approaching; *Now*, ſays he, *is your ſalvation nearer than when you believed:* And yet he calls even upon ſuch to awake out of ſleep. Even ſincere chriſtians are too often apt to fall into negligence and ſecurity; they contract an idolent, dull, lazy temper, as to the duties of religion and divine things: ſometimes their love languiſhes, their zeal cools, and they become remiſs or formal in their devotions. Now ſuch a ſtate of dulneſs and inactivity is often repreſented by the metaphor Sleep: becauſe as Sleep diſables us from natural actions, and blunts our animal ſenſes, ſo this ſpiritual ſleep indiſpoſes the ſoul for the ſervice of God and ſpiritual ſenſations.

Hence it follows, that to *awake out of ſleep*, ſignifies to rouſe out of carnal ſecurity, to ſhake off ſpiritual ſloth, and to engage in the concerns of religion with vigour and full exertion, like men awake.

And as even chriſtians are too often liable to fall into ſome degrees of ſpiritual ſleep, as they often nod and ſlumber over the great concerns of religion, which demand the utmoſt exertion of all their powers, notwithſtanding the principle of divine life implanted in them, there is great need to call even upon them to awake. Thus the apoſtle rouſes the Roman chriſtians, including himſelf among them, as ſtanding in need of the ſame excitation. *It is high time* for us, ſays he; that is, for you and me, *to awake out of ſleep.*

This is a duty proper at all times. There is not one moment of time in which a chriſtian may lawfully and ſafely be ſecure and negligent. Yet the apoſtle intimates, that ſome particular times call for peculiar vigilance and activity; and that to ſleep at ſuch times is a ſin peculiarly aggravated. *Now*, ſays he,

he, *it is high time* for us *to awake out of ſleep:* this is not a time for us to ſleep: this time calls upon us to rouſe and exert ourſelves: this is the hour for action: we have ſlept too long already: now let us rouſe and riſe.

The apoſtle alſo intimates, that the ſerious conſideration and right knowledge of time, is a ſtrong excitement to awake out of ſleep. *Knowing the time,* ſays he, *that now it is high time to awake out of ſleep;* that is, your knowing and ſeriouſly conſidering the importance, the uncertainty, and the ſhortneſs of time in general, and the peculiar circumſtances of the preſent time in particular, may be ſufficient to rouſe you. Natural ſleep ſhould be in its ſeaſon: *They that ſleep, ſleep in the night. But,* ſays he, *we are all the children of the light, and the children of the day. We are brought out of darkneſs into the glorious light of the goſpel;* therefore let not us ſleep, as do others. Conſider the time, that it is day-light with you; and you cannot but be ſenſible, that it is now high time for us to awake out of ſleep: this is the hour to riſe. Therefore let us awake to righteouſneſs.

The reaſon the apoſtles urges upon the Roman chriſtians to awake at that time, is very ſtrong and moving: it is this; *Now is our ſalvation nearer than when we believed.* Salvation is haſtening quick towards us upon the wings of time. As many years as are paſt ſince we firſt believed in Chriſt, by ſo many years nearer is our ſalvation: Or, as he expreſſes it in the next verſe, *The night is far ſpent, the day is at hand.* The gloomy, turbulent night of the preſent ſtate is near over; the dawn of eternal day is juſt ready to open upon us; and can we ſleep at ſuch a time? What, ſleep on the very threſhold of heaven! ſleep, when ſalvation is juſt ready to embrace us! ſleep, when the dawn of celeſtial day is juſt about ſhining around us! Is it poſſible we ſhould ſleep at ſuch a time? Muſt not the proſpect of everlaſting ſalvation ſo near us, the thought that in a very little time

time we ſhall be in heaven, rouſe us, and fix us in a poſture of eager expectation and conſtant watchfulneſs?

The text implies, that chriſtians ſhould always be growing in grace; and that the nearer their ſalvation is, the more lively and zealous ſhould they be; and ſince it is nearer this year than the laſt, they ought to be more holy this year than the laſt. The nearer they are to heaven, the more heavenly they ſhould be. The approach of ſalvation is a ſtrong motive to holineſs; and the ſtronger, by how much the nearer it is.

My chief deſign at preſent is to lead you to know the time, and to make ſuch reflections upon it as its nature and circumſtances require, and as are ſuited to our reſpective conditions.

The firſt thing I would ſet you upon, as a neceſſary introduction to all the reſt, is the important but neglected duty of ſelf-examination. Methinks it may ſhock a man to enter upon a new year without knowing whether he ſhall be in heaven or hell before the end of it: and that man can give but a very poor account of the laſt year, and perhaps twenty or thirty years before it, that cannot yet give any ſatisfactory anſwer to this grand queſtion. Time is given us to determine this intereſting point, and to uſe proper means to determine it in our favour. Let us therefore reſolve this day, that we will not live another year ſtrangers to ourſelves, and utterly uncertain what will become of us through an endleſs duration. This day let us put this queſtion to our hearts? "What am I? Am I an humble, dutiful ſervant of God? or am I a diſobedient, impenitent ſinner? Am I a diſciple of Chriſt in reality? or do I only wear his name, and make an empty profeſſion of his religion? Whither am I bound? for heaven or hell? Which am I moſt fit for in temper? for the region of perfect holineſs, or for that of ſin and impurity? Is it not time this inquiry ſhould be determined? Shall I ſtupidly

pidly delay the determination, till it be paſſed by the irrevocable ſentence of the ſupreme Judge, before whom I may ſtand before this year is at a cloſe? Alas! if it ſhould then be againſt me, my doom will be remedileſs. But if I ſhould now diſcover my caſe to be bad, bleſſed be God, it is not too late to alter it. I may yet obtain a good hope through grace, though my preſent hope ſhould be found to be that of the hypocrite."

If I ſhould puſh home this inquiry, it will probably diſcover two ſorts of perſons among us, to whom my text leads me particularly to addreſs myſelf; the one, entirely deſtitute of true religion, and conſequently altogether unprepared for a happy eternity; and yet careleſs and ſecure in that dangerous ſituation; the other, Chriſtians indeed, and conſequently habitually prepared for their latter end; but criminally remiſs or formal in the concerns of religion, and in the duties they owe to God and man. The one, ſunk in a deep ſleep in ſin; the other nodding and ſlumbering, though upon the ſlippery brink of eternity. Now as to both theſe ſorts of perſons, it is high time for them to awake out of ſleep. And this exhortation I would preſs upon them, firſt, by ſome general conſiderations common to both; and then, by ſome particular conſiderations proper to each reſpectively.

The general conſiderations are ſuch as theſe:

I. Conſider the uncertainty of time as to you. You may die the next year, the next month, the next week, the next hour, or the next moment. And I once knew a miniſter † who, while he was making this obſervation, was made a ſtriking example of it, and inſtantly dropt down dead in the pulpit. When you look forward through the year now begun, you ſee what may never be your own. No, you cannot call one day of it your own. Before that day comes, you

† The Rev. Mr. Conn of Bladenſburgh, in Maryland.

you may have done with time, and be entered upon eternity. Men preſume upon time, as if it was certainly entailed upon them for ſo many years; and this is the deluſion that ruins multitudes. How many are now in eternity, who begun the laſt year with as little expectation of death, and as ſanguine hopes of long life, as you have at the beginning of the preſent? And this may be your doom. Should a prophet, inſtructed in the ſecret, open to you the book of the divine decrees, as Jeremiah did to Hananiah, ſome of you would no doubt ſee it written there, *this year thou ſhalt die.* Jer. xxviii. 16. Some unexpected moment in this year will put an end to all the labours and enjoyments of the preſent ſtate, and all the duties and opportunities peculiar to it.

Therefore if ſinners would repent and believe; if they would obtain the favour of God, and preparation for the heavenly ſtate; and if ſaints would make high improvements in religion; if they would make their calling and election ſure, that they may not ſtumble over doubts and fears into the preſence of their judge; if they would do any thing for the honour of God, and the intereſts of the Redeemer's kingdom in the world; if they would be of ſervice to their families, their friends, their country and mankind in general, now is the time for them to awake out of ſleep, and ſet about their reſpective work. Now is the time, becauſe this is the only time they are certain of. Sinners! you may be in hell before this year finiſhes its round, if you delay the great buſineſs of religion any longer. And ſaints! if you neglect to improve the preſent time, you may be compelled to ſhoot the gulph of eternity, and launch away to unknown coaſts, full of fears and perplexities; you may be cut off from all opportunities of doing ſervice to God and mankind, of endeavouring to inſtil the principles of religious knowledge and practice into the minds of your dear children, and thoſe under your care, unleſs you catch the preſent hour. For remember, time is uncertain.

Youth, health, ſtrength, buſineſs, riches, power, wiſdom, and whatever this world contains, cannot enſure it. No, the thread of life is held by the divine hand alone; and God can ſnap it aſunder, without warning, in whatever moment he pleaſes.

II. Conſider the ſhortneſs of time as to you. Time, in its utmoſt extent, including what is paſt from the creation, and what is future to the conflagration, is nothing to eternity. But the time of your life is vaſtly ſhorter. That part of time which is parcelled out to you, is not only uncertain, but extremely ſhort: it is uncertain when it will end, but it is abſolutely certain it will end very ſoon. You cannot hope to ſurpaſs the common ſtandard of long lives: and that is but ſeventy or eighty years. Nay, you have but very little reaſon to hope you ſhall arrive to this. The chance againſt it, if I may ſo ſpeak, is at leaſt ten to one; that is, there are at leaſt ten that die on this ſide of ſeventy or eighty, for one that lives to that period: it is therefore far more likely that you will never ſpend ſeventy or eighty years upon earth. A ſhorter ſpace than that will probably convey you from this world to heaven or hell. And is it not high time then for you to awake out of ſleep? Your work is great; your time is ſhort: you have none to ſpare; none to trifle away: it is all little enough for the work you have to do.

III. Conſider how much of your time has been loſt and miſpent already.

Some of you that are now the ſincere ſervants of God, may recollect how late in life you engaged in his ſervice; how long you ſtood idle in his vineyard, when his work was before you, and his wages in your offer. How many guilty days and years have you ſpent in the drudgery of ſin, and in a baſe neglect of God and your immortal ſouls! Others of you, who have the noble pleaſure of reflecting that you devoted yourſelves to God early, in compariſon of others, are yet ſenſible how many days and years were loſt before you

you made ſo wiſe a choice, loſt in the ſins and follies of childhood and youth. And the beſt of you have reaſon to lament how much precious time you have miſpent, even ſince you heartily engaged in the ſervice of God; how many opportunities, both of doing good to others and receiving good yourſelves, you have loſt by your own careleſſneſs. How many ſeaſons for devotion have you neglected or miſimproved! O! how little of your time has been devoted to God and the ſervice of your ſouls! How much of it has been waſted upon trifles, or in an over eager purſuit of this vain world? Does not the loſs, upon the whole, amount to many days, and even years? And a day is no ſmall loſs to a creature, who has ſo few days at moſt to prepare for eternity.

As to many of you, is it not ſadly evident you have loſt all the days and years that have rolled over your heads? you have perhaps managed time well as to the purpoſes of the preſent life; but that is but the loweſt and moſt inſignificant uſe of it. Time is given as a ſpace for repentance and preparation for eternity: But have you not entirely loſt it, as to this grand uſe of it? Nay, are not your hearts more hard, and you leſs prepared for eternity now than you were ſome years ago? Have you not been heaping up the mountain of ſin higher and higher every day, and eſtranging yourſelves from God more and more? To heighten the loſs, you ſhould conſider it is irrecoverable. Nothing is more impoſſible than to recal paſt time. It is gone! it is gone for ever! Yeſterday can no more return than the years before the flood. Power, wiſdom, tears, intreaties, all the united efforts of the whole univerſe of creatures, can never cauſe it to return.

And is there ſo much of your time loſt? loſt beyond all poſſibility of recovery? And is it not high time for you to awake out of ſleep? Have you any more precious time to throw away? Shall the time to come be abuſed and loſt, like the paſt? Or will you not

not endeavour to redeem the time you have loſt, in the only way in which it can be redeemed, that is, by doubling your induſtry in time to come? Much muſt now be done in a little time, ſince you have now but little left. You have indeed had 10, 20, 30, or 40 precious years; but, alas! they are irrecoverably loſt. And may not this thought ſtartle you, and cauſe you to awake out of ſleep? The loſs of the ſame number of kingdoms would not be half ſo great. To a candidate for eternity, whoſe everlaſting ſtate depends upon the improvement of time, a year is of infinitely greater importance than a kingdom can be to any of the ſons of men.

IV. Conſider, the great purpoſes of the preſent life can be anſwered only in time; for there are certain important duties peculiar to this world, which, if unperformed here, muſt remain ſo for ever, becauſe eternity is not the ſeaſon for them.

Both worlds have their proper buſineſs allotted them; and the proper buſineſs of the one cannot be done in the other. Eternity and time are intended for quite different purpoſes. The one is ſeed-time; the other, harveſt: the one is the ſeaſon for working; the other, for receiving the wages: and if we would invert the unchangeable order of things, and defer the buſineſs of life till after death, we ſhall find ourſelves miſerably miſtaken. Therefore, if ſaints would make progreſs in the religion of ſinners, I mean that religion which becomes our preſent ſinful ſtate; that religion which is a courſe of diſcipline to prepare and educate us for heaven; which is a painful proceſs for our refinement, to qualify us for that pure region; if they would cheriſh a noble ambition, and not only enſure happineſs, but high degrees of it; if they would be of ſervice to mankind as members of civil or religious ſociety; and particularly, if they would be inſtrumental to form others for a bleſſed immortality, and ſave ſouls from death, by converting ſinners from the error of their way; if they would do theſe things, the

preſent

preſent life is the only time. In heaven they will have more noble employ. Theſe things muſt now be done, or never. And O! what pious heart can bear the thought of leaving the world while theſe are undone? Would you not deſire to enter into heaven ripe for it? To be completely formed by your education, before you enter upon a ſtate of maturity? O! does not your heart burn to do ſomething for that gracious God and Saviour, that has done and ſuffered ſo much for you! to be an inſtrument of ſome ſervice to the world, while you are paſſing through it? If this be your deſire, now is the time. When once death has laid his cold hand upon you, you are for ever diſabled from ſuch ſervices as theſe. Then farewell to all opportunities of uſefulneſs, in the manner of the preſent life. Then, even your children and deareſt friends may run on in ſin, and periſh, while it is not in your power ſo much as to ſpeak one word to diſſuade them. Therefore, enter upon this new year with hearty reſolutions to be more zealous and laborious in theſe reſpects than you have ever yet been.

Again, If ſinners, who now are in a ſtate of condemnation, would eſcape out of it; if they who are at preſent ſlaves to ſin would become ſincere converts to righteouſneſs; if they would uſe the means of grace for that purpoſe, now is the time. There is none of this work in hell: they no ſooner enter into the eternal world, than their ſtate will be unchangeably and eternally fixed. The preſent life is the only ſtate of trial; and if we do not turn out well in this trial, we ſhall never have another. All are ripe for eternity, before they are removed into it; the good ripe for heaven, and the wicked ripe for hell; the one, veſſels of mercy afore-prepared for glory; and the other, veſſels of wrath fitted for deſtruction, and for nothing elſe: and therefore they muſt remain for ever in their reſpective manſions. In hell indeed ſinners repent; but their repentance is their puniſhment,

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and has no tendency to amend or ſave them. They mourn and weep; but their tears are but oil to increaſe the flame. They cry, and perhaps pray; but the hour of audience and acceptance is paſt—paſt for ever! The means of grace are all gone: the ſanctifying influences of the ſpirit are all withdrawn for ever. And hence they will corrupt and putrify into mere maſſes of pure unmingled wickedneſs and miſery. Sinners! realize this thought, and ſure it muſt rouſe you out of ſleep. Trifle on a little longer, and it is over with you: ſpend a few days more as you have ſpent your time paſt, and you will be ingulphed in as hopeleſs miſery as any devil in hell. Another year now meets you, and invites you to improve it to prepare for eternity; and if you waſte it like the paſt, you may be undone for ever. Therefore, take Solomon's warning, *whatſoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor wiſdom, nor knowledge in the grave, whither you are going.* Eccl. ix. 10.

Theſe conſiderations, methinks, muſt have ſome weight, both upon ſlumbering chriſtians and impenitent ſinners, to perſuade them to awake out of ſleep. I now proceed to a few conſiderations peculiar to each.

Upon ſlumbering ſaints I would again try the force of the apoſtolic conſideration in my text; *awake, for now is your ſalvation nearer than when you believed.* Heaven may be only at the diſtance of a year or an hour from you: it is, however, certainly nearer to-day than ever it was before. As many days as are paſt, ſo much the leſs time have you to groan away in the preſent life. And ſhall you indeed, in ſo ſhort a time, be imparadiſed in the boſom of your God? Shall you ſo ſoon have done with all the ſins and ſorrows that now oppreſs you? Are your days of warfare with temptation ſo near a cloſe? Shall you ſo ſoon be advanced to all the glory and bleſſedneſs of the heavenly ſtate, and be as happy as your nature can

can bear? Is this indeed the caſe? And muſt not the proſpect rouſe you, and fire your hearts? Is not ſalvation the thing you have been longing and labouring for? And now, can you ſlumber when it is ſo near? Can you ſleep when the night of life is ſo far ſpent, and the dawn of eternal day is ready to ſhine around you? Can you ſleep on the brink of eternity, on the threſhold of heaven?

The apoſtle here intimates, that the approach of ſalvation is great cauſe of joy to believers—cauſe of joy, though death lies between, and ſalvation cannot reach us till we paſs through the gloomy vale. Therefore, believers, I may wiſh you joy, in proſpect that you ſhall ſoon die. This wretched world ſhall not be your reſidence always. Your worſt enemies upon earth or in hell will not be able to confine you here the length of Methuſelah's age, much leſs for ever. You may rejoice in the proſpect of your ſpeedy diſſolution, becauſe death is not nearer to you than your ſalvation. Before your cooling clay is ſhrouded, your enlarged ſouls will be in heaven. You will be ſtriking inſtances of the truth of Solomon's remark, that *the day of one's death is better than the day of his birth.* Eccl. vii. 1. Your death will be your birth-day, which will introduce you into a better world. Mortals in their language will pronounce you dead; but angels will ſhout an immortal born! born to an everlaſting life! born to a crown! born to *an inheritance incorruptible, and that fadeth not away.* And muſt not the proſpect of this glorious day ſo near rouſe you out of ſleep? Can you not watch one hour, or one year? ſhall ſalvation ſurprize you aſleep?

Some of you perhaps are now thinking, "O! if I were certain my ſalvation is ſo near, it would even tranſport me, and inſpire me with flaming zeal and unwearied activity. But alas! I am afraid of a diſappointment. It is true, I cannot but entertain ſome humble hope, which the ſevereſt trial cannot overthrow. But O! what if I ſhould be miſtaken! This

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jealouſy makes me tremble, and ſhrink back from the proſpect."

This may be the caſe of many an honeſt ſoul. But can this be pleaded as a reaſon or excuſe for ſecurity? Alas! can you ſleep in ſuch a dreadful ſuſpenſe? ſleep, while you are uncertain what ſhall become of you through an endleſs duration? If you have not the ſure proſpect of ſalvation to awaken you, methinks the fear of damnation muſt effectually do it; for it is certain, one or the other is near you: therefore endeavour, by ſevere ſelf-examination, to puſh the matter to ſome certain iſſue. Reſolve that you will not ſpend another day, much leſs another year, in a ſtate of ſuch dangerous, alarming uncertainty. If this point is not yet determined, it is certainly *high time for you to awake out of ſleep.*

Conſider farther how far your religious improvements have come ſhort of your own reſolutions and expectations, as well as your obligations. Ye happy ſouls, who now enjoy a good hope through grace, recollect the time when you were in a very different and more melancholy condition; the time when your ſpirits bled with a thouſand wounds; when the terrors of the Lord ſet themſelves in array againſt you, and the thunders of Sinai rung the moſt alarming peals in your aſtoniſhing ears; when the arrows of God ſtuck faſt in you, and the poiſon of them drank up your ſpirits; when guilt lay heavy upon your conſciences, and ſunk you down into the depth of deſpondency; when you were haunted with alarming apprehenſions of divine vengeance night and day; when you went about crying for a Saviour—"O! for a Saviour!"—but your cries ſeemed to be in vain; O! what were then your vows and reſolutions, if it ſhould pleaſe God to deliver you! Did you then expect you would fall aſleep ſo ſoon after your deliverance? Recollect alſo the happy hour, when the face of a reconciled God firſt ſmiled upon you, when Jeſus appeared to your minds in all the attractive glo-

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ries of a Saviour, an all-ſufficient Saviour in a deſperate caſe; when he *delivered your ſoul from death, your feet from falling, and your eyes from tears;* when he inſpired your deſponding hearts with hope, and revived you with the heavenly cordials of his love; O! what then were your thoughts and reſolutions? How ſtrongly were you bent to make him returns of gratitude! how firmly did you bind yourſelves to be his ſervants for ever! But how ſoon, alas! did you begin to ſlumber! How far ſhort have you fallen of your vows and promiſes! Recollect alſo what were your expectations at that memorable time. O! would you then have believed it, that in the ſpace of 10 or 20 years you would have made ſuch ſmall progreſs in your heavenly courſe, as you have in fact done? Had you not better hopes! But, alas! how are you diſappointed! what ſorry ſervants have you been to ſo good a maſter, in compariſon of what you expected! And can you bear the thought of ſlumbering on ſtill? O! ſhall this year paſs by like the former? Sure you cannot bear the thought. Therefore awake out of ſleep; riſe and work for your God.

Let me conclude my addreſs to you, with this advice: Begin this new year by dedicating yourſelves afreſh to God, and ſolemnly renewing your covenant with him. Take ſome hour of retirement, this evening, or as ſoon as you can redeem time. Call yourſelves to account for the year paſt, and all your life. Recollect your various infirmities, mourn over them, and reſolve, in the ſtrength of divine grace, you will guard againſt them for the time to come. Examine yourſelves both as to the reality of your religion, and as to your proficiency in it. Conclude the whole by caſting yourſelves anew upon Jeſus Chriſt, and devoting yourſelves for this new year entirely to him; reſolved to live more to him than you have hitherto done, and depending upon him to conduct you ſafe through whatever this year may bring forth, whether proſperity or adverſity, whether life or death. This

is the true and only means whereby we can attain that happineſs we ought all to be in purſuit of: that pleaſure which will never end.

Let me now addreſs a few conſiderations to impenitent ſinners, peculiarly adapted to them.

Conſider what a dreadful riſk you run by neglecting the preſent time. The longer you indulge yourſelves in ſin, the harder it will be to break off from it; and do you not then run the riſk of cementing an eternal union with that deadly evil? The longer you cheriſh a wicked temper, the ſtronger the habits of ſin will grow. And are you not in danger of becoming eternal ſlaves to it! The longer you continue impenitent, the harder your hearts will grow; the oftener you do violence to your conſciences, the more inſenſible they will become. And are you not taking direct ways to confirm yourſelves in impenetrable hardneſs of heart, and contracting a reprobate mind? The more you ſin againſt God, and grieve his Spirit, the more you provoke him to withhold the influences of his grace, and in righteous judgment to give you up. And dare you to run ſo dreadful a riſk as this? The more time you waſte, the greater is your work, and the leſs your time to perform it. By how much the longer you waſte your time, by ſo much the ſhorter you make your day of grace. Alas! the day of your viſitation may be drawing faſt towards evening, when *the things that belong to your peace will be eternally hid from your eyes.* Is it not then high time for you to awake out of ſleep? Will you rather run ſuch a dreadful riſk than rouſe out of your ſtupid ſecurity? O! what will be the end of ſuch a courſe!

Let me deal plainly and without reſerve with you, on a point too dangerous to allow of flattery. If you do not now awake, and turn your attention to the concerns of your ſouls, it is but too probable you will ſtill go on in carnal ſecurity, and at laſt periſh for ever. Bleſſed be God, this is not certain, and therefore

fore you have no reaſon to deſpair; but it is really too probable, and therefore you have great reaſon to fear. This alarming probability, methinks, muſt force its evidence upon your own minds, upon principles you cannot reaſonably diſpute. You have lived twenty, thirty, or forty years, or more, in the world. In this time you have enjoyed the ſame means of grace which you can expect in time to come. You had done leſs to provoke the great God to caſt you off: your ſinful habits were not ſo ſtrong, nor your hearts ſo much hardened through the deceitfulneſs of ſin; you were not ſo much inured to the goſpel, nor were your conſciences ſo ſtunned by repeated violences, as you may expect in time to come: and the longer you live in this condition, the more and more diſcouraging it will grow. I will by no means limit a ſovereign God in the exerciſe of his free grace. But this is evident, that in human view, and according to appearances, it was much more likely you would have been converted in time paſt, than that you will be converted in time to come. The moſt hopeful part of life is over with you: and yet even in that, you were not brought to repentance. How much leſs likely is it then, that you will be converted in time to come?

Suffer me to tell you plainly (for it is benevolence that makes the declaration) that I cannot but tremble for ſome of you. I am really afraid ſome of you will periſh for ever;—and the ground of my fear is this: The moſt generous charity cannot but conclude, that ſome of you are impenitent ſinners; your temper and conduct proclaim it aloud: and it is very unlikely, all things conſidered, that you will be ever otherwiſe. Since you have not repented in the moſt promiſing ſeaſon of life, it is much to be feared you will not repent in the leſs promiſing part of it. And ſince no impenitent unholy ſinner can enter into the kingdom of heaven, it is much to be feared you will periſh for ever; not becauſe the mercy of God,

or

or the merit of Chriſt, is inſufficient to ſave you, if you ſhould apply to him for it according to the terms of the goſpel; not becauſe your caſe is in itſelf hopeleſs, if you would awake out of ſleep, and ſeek the Lord in earneſt: nor becauſe you have not ſufficient encouragement for laborious endeavours; but becauſe it is too likely you will go on careleſs and ſecure, as you have done, and perſiſt in it, till all your time is gone, and then your caſe will be deſperate. I honeſtly warn you of your danger, which is too great to be concealed. And yet I give you ſufficient encouragement to fly from it, while I aſſure you, that if you now lay your condition to heart, and earneſtly uſe all proper means for your converſion, you have the utmoſt reaſon to hope for ſucceſs: as much reaſon as the ſaints now in heaven once had, when in your condition; and in your condition they once were.

Therefore, now, ſinners, awake out of ſleep. Inſtead of entering upon this new year with carouſals and extravagancies, conſecrate it to the great purpoſe for which it is given you, by engaging in earneſt in the great work of your ſalvation. *What meaneſt thou, O ſleeper? Ariſe, call upon thy God, if ſo be he will think upon thee, that thou periſh not.* Jonah i. 6. *Awake, thou that ſleepeſt, and ariſe from the dead, that Chriſt may give thee light.* Eph. v. 14.

Conſider, this year may lay you low in the duſt of death. How many are now in the grave, who ſaw the laſt new-year's day! And though I cannot point out the perſons, yet, without a ſpirit of prophecy, I may venture to foretel, that ſome of us will be in heaven or hell before this year performs its round; ſome grey head, or ſome ſprightly youth; perhaps you, or perhaps I. And ſince none of us know who it ſhall be, none of us are exempted from the neceſſity of immediate preparation. O! that we may all be ſo wiſe, as to conſider our latter end!

I beg

I beg leave of my promiſcuous auditory to employ a few minutes in addreſſing myſelf to my important family, whom my paternal affection would always ſingle out from the reſt, even when I am ſpeaking in general terms to a mixed crowd. Therefore, my dear charge, my pupils, my children, and every tender and endearing name! ye young immortals, ye embryo-angels or infant-fiends, ye blooming, lovely, fading flowers of human nature, the hope of your parents and friends, of church and ſtate, the hope, joy, and glory of your teachers! hear one that loves you; one that has nothing to do in the world but to promote your beſt intereſt; one that would account this the greateſt bleſſing he could enjoy in his pilgrimage, and whoſe nights and days are ſometimes made almoſt equally reſtleſs by his affectionate anxieties for you; hear him upon a ſubject in which you are moſt intimately intereſted; a ſubject the moſt important that even an apoſtle or an angel could addreſs you upon; and that is, the right improvement of time, the preſent time, and preparation for eternity. It is neceſſary that you in particular, you above all others, ſhould know the time, that it is now high time for you to awake out of ſleep. I make no doubt but you all look upon religion as an object worthy of your notice. You all as certainly believe there is a God, as that there is a creature, or that yourſelves exiſt: you all believe heaven and hell are not majeſtic chimeras, or fairy lands, but the moſt important realities; and that you muſt in a little time be the reſidents of the one or the other. It cannot therefore be a queſtion with any of you, whether you ſhall mind religion at all! On that you are all determined. But the queſtion is, what is the moſt proper time for it? whether the preſent, or ſome uncertain hereafter? And in what order you ſhould attend to it, whether in the firſt place, and above all, even in your early days? or whether you ſhould not rather indulge yourſelves in the pleaſures of youth for ſome time,

time, and then make religion the dull buſineſs of old age. If any of you heſitate upon this point, it may be eaſily ſolved. This is the moſt convenient, promiſing ſeaſon for this purpoſe that you are likely to ſee: never will you live more free from care, or more remote from temptation. When you launch out into the noiſe, and buſtle, and hurry, and company, and buſineſs, and vice of the world, you will ſoon find the ſcene changed for the worſe. He muſt be a tempter to himſelf, who can find a temptation, while immured under this roof, and immerſed in books. Never will you ſee the time, in your natural ſtate, when your ſins will be ſo conquerable, and your hearts ſo tender, and ſuſceptive of good impreſſions; though even now, if you know yourſelves, you find your ſins are invincibly ſtrong to you, and your hearts impenetrably hard. Therefore now, my dear youth, now in this inviting ſeaſon, awake out of ſleep; awake to righteouſneſs, and ſin not. I beg you would not now commit ſin with a deſign to repent of it afterwards; for can you be ſo fooliſh, as knowingly and deliberately to do that which you explicitly intend to repent of? that is, to do that which you intend to wiſh undone, and to lament with broken hearts that ever you did it. Can Bedlam itſelf parallel the folly of this? O take warning from the fate of your wretched predeceſſors in this courſe. Could you aſk the crowds of loſt ghoſts, who are now ſuffering the puniſhment of their ſin, whether they intended to perſiſt impenitent in it, and periſh? they would all anſwer, that they either vainly flattered themſelves they had repented already, or intended to repent before they died; but death ſeized them unawares, and put an end to all their ſanguine hopes. Young ſinners among them imagined they ſhould not die till old age; and old age itſelf thought it might hold out a few days longer, and that it was time enough to repent. But, O! they have now diſcovered their error, when it is too late to correct it. Therefore do not harbour one thought

thought of putting off repentance to a ſick bed, or to old age; that is the moſt inconvenient and deſperate ſeaſon in your whole life; and if you fix upon this, one would think you had viewed your whole life on purpoſe to find out the moſt unfit and diſcouraging period of it for the moſt neceſſary, difficult and important work in the world. Come then, now devote yourſelves to God, and away with all excuſes and delays. Remember, that upon the principles I have laid down, principles that muſt gain your aſſent by the force of their own evidence, I ſay, remember, that upon theſe principles it is extremely likely you will always perſiſt impenitent in ſin, and periſh for ever, if you waſte away the preſent ſeaſon of youth, deſtitute of vital religion. You may every day have leſs and leſs hope of yourſelves: and can you bear the thought of periſhing for ever? Are your hearts ſo ſoon arrived to ſuch a pitch of hardineſs, as to be proof againſt the terrors of the proſpect? It cannot be? for *who among us can dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us can dwell with everlaſting burnings?* Iſa. xxxiii. 14. As for ſuch of you as have not the great work to begin, I have only this to ſay, *Be ſtedfaſt, immoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, foraſmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.* 1 Cor. xv. 58.

SERMON

SERMON LX.

ON THE *DEATH* OF HIS LATE MAJESTY, *KING GEORGE* II.*

2 SAM. i. 19.—*How are the Mighty fallen!*

GEORGE is no more! George, the mighty, the juſt, the gentle, and the wiſe; George, the father of Britain and her Colonies, the guardian of laws and liberty, the protector of the oppreſſed, the arbiter of Europe, the terror of tyrants and France; George, the friend of man, the benefactor of millions, is no more!—millions tremble at the alarm. Britain expreſſes her ſorrow in national groans. Europe re-echoes to the melancholy ſound. The melancholy ſound circulates far and wide. This remote American continent ſhares in the loyal ſympathy. The wide intermediate Atlantic rolls the tide of grief to theſe diſtant ſhores; and even the recluſe ſons of Naſſau-Hall feel the immenſe bereavement, with all the ſenſibility of a filial heart; and muſt mourn with their country, with Britain, with Europe, with the world—George was our Father too. In his reign, a reign ſo auſpicious to literature, and all the improvements of human nature, was this foundation laid; and the College of New-Jerſey received its exiſtence. And though, like the ſun, he ſhone in a diſtant ſphere, we felt, moſt ſenſibly felt, his benign influences cheriſhing Science and her votaries in this her new-built temple.

In doing this humble honour to the memory of our late ſovereign, we cannot incur the ſuſpicion of mercenary

* Delivered in Naſſau-Hall, Jan. 14, 1761.

cenary mourners paying homage to the riſing ſun. But we indulge and give vent to the ſpontaneous, diſintereſted ſorrows of ſincere loyalty and gratitude, and drop our honeſt tears over his ſacred duſt, who can be our benefactor no more; too diſtant, too obſcure and undeſerving, to hope for the favourable notice of his illuſtrious ſucceſſor. Let ambition put on the face of mourning, and all the parade of affected grief, within the reach of the royal eye; and make her court to a living prince, with all the ceremonial forms of lamentation for the deceaſed; but let our tears flow down unnoticed into our own boſoms. Let our grief, which is always fond of retirement, cheriſh and vent itſelf without oſtentation, and free from the reſtraint of the public eye. It will at leaſt afford us the generous pleaſure of reflecting, that we voluntarily diſcharge our duty, unbribed and diſintereſted; and it will give relief to our burſting hearts, impatient of the ſuppreſſion of our ſorrows.

How is *the mighty fallen!*—fallen under the ſuperior power of death!—Death the king of terrors, the conqueror of conquerors; whom riches cannot bribe, nor power reſiſt; whom goodneſs cannot ſoften, nor dignity and loyalty deter, or awe to a reverential diſtance. Death intrudes into palaces as well as cottages; and arreſts the monarch as well as the ſlave. The robes of majeſty and the rags of beggary are equal preludes to the ſhroud: and a throne is only a precipice, from whence to fall with greater noiſe and more extenſive ruin into the grave. Since death has climbed the Britiſh throne, and thence precipitated George the Mighty, who can hope to eſcape? If temperance, that beſt preſervative of health and life; if extenſive utility to half the world; if the united prayers of nations; if the collected virtues of the Man and the King, could ſecure an earthly immortality—never, O lamented George! never ſhould thy fall have added freſh honours to the trophies of death. But ſince this king of Britain is no more, let the inhabitants of

courts look out for manſions in the duſt. Let thoſe gods on earth prepare to die like men; and ſink down to a level with beggars, worms and clay. Let ſubjects *be wiſe, and conſider their latter end,* when the alarm of mortality is ſounded from the throne; and He who lived for their benefit, dies for their benefit too;—dies to remind them, that they alſo muſt die.

But how aſtoniſhing and lamentable is the ſtupidity of mankind! Can the natural or the moral world exhibit another phenomenon ſo ſhocking and unaccountable! Death ſweeps off thouſands of our fellow-ſubjects every year. Our neighbours, like leaves in autumn, drop into the grave, in a thick ſucceſſion; and our attendance upon funerals is almoſt as frequent and formal as our viſits of friendſhip or complaiſance. Nay, ſometimes death enters in at our windows, and ravages our families before our eyes. The air, the ocean, the earth, and all the elements, are armed with the powers of death; and have their peſtilential vapours and inclemencies, their tempeſts and inundations, their eruptions and volcanos, to deſtroy the life of man. A thouſand dangers lie in ambuſh for us. Nay, the principles of mortality lurk in our own conſtitutions: and ſickneſs, the herald of the laſt enemy, often warns us to prepare. Yet how few realize the thought, that they muſt die! How few familiarize to their minds that all-important hour, pregnant with conſequences of great, of incomparable, of infinite moment! How many forget they muſt die, till they feel it; and ſtand fearleſs, unapprehenſive and inſolent, upon the ſlippery brink of eternity, till they unexpectedly fall, and are ingulphed for ever in the boundleſs ocean! The ſons of Adam the ſinner, thoſe fleeting phantoms of a day, put on the air of immortality upon earth; and make no proviſion for their ſubſiſtence in the proper region of immortals beyond the grave. Pilgrims and ſtrangers imagine themſelves everlaſting reſidents; and make this tranſitory life their all, as if earth was to be their eternal home;

home; as if eternity was but a fairy-land; and heaven and hell but majeſtic chimeras. But ſhall not this loud alarm, that ſpreads over half the globe, awaken us out of our vain dream of an earthly immortality? When *the mighty* is *fallen*, ſhall not the feeble tremble? If the father of a people muſt ceaſe to live, ſhall not the people expect to die? If vulgar deaths are ſo frequent or inſignificant, that they have loſt their monitory force, and are viewed with as much indifference as the ſetting of the ſun or the fading of a flower; ſhall not the death of a King, the death of the King of Britain, conſtrain his ſubjects to realize the proſpect of their own mortality, and diffuſe that univerſal ſerioufneſs among them which that proſpect inſpires? If thus improved, this public loſs would be a public bleſſing; and the reformation of a kingdom would be a greater happineſs than the life of the beſt of princes. Thus improved, how eaſy and how glorious would the death of George the Second render the reign of George the Third, who now ſways the ſceptre, and in whom the hopes of kingdoms center! To govern ſubjects on earth, who are prepared for the hierarchy of heaven, would be a province worthy of an angel.

Since the mighty is fallen; ſince George is no more; how vain are all things beneath the ſun! *Vanity of vanities; all is vanity.* How unworthy the hopes, how inferior to the deſires, how unequal to the duration of human nature! Can the riches of Britain, or the honours of a crown; can the extent of dominion, or the laurels of victory, now afford the leaſt pleaſure to the royal corpſe that lies ſenſeleſs in the duſt; or to the royal ſpirit which has winged its flight to its own region, to the world of kindred ſpirits? No; all theſe are now as inſignificant as mere nothings to him, as the conqueſts of Alexander, or the riches and honours of the Henries and Edwards, who filled the ſame throne centuries ago.

"Who

" Who then art thou, who ſetteſt thine affections on things below? Art thou greater than the deceaſed? Doſt thou value thyſelf on thy birth? The moſt highly deſcended is no more! Doſt thou value thyſelf on thy riches? The King of Britain is no more! Doſt thou value thyſelf on thy power? The maſter of the ſeas, the arbiter of Europe, is no more! Doſt thou glory in thy conſtancy, humanity, affection to thy friend; juſtice, veracity, popularity, univerſal love— But I forbear." Human vanity cannot ſwell ſo high as to preſume upon the compariſon.

" How lately were the eyes of all Europe" and America, " thrown upon this great Man? For man let me call him now, nor contradict the declaration which his mortality has made. They that find him now, muſt ſeek for him; and ſeek for him in the duſt! What on earth but muſt tell us this world is vain, if thrones declare it! If kings, if Britiſh kings are demonſtrations of it!

———*O, how wretched*
Is that poor man that hangs on Princes favours!

" A throne is the ſhining period, the golden termination of the worldly man's proſpect. His paſſions affect, his underſtanding conceives nothing beyond it, or the favours it can beſtow. The ſun, the expanſe of heaven, or what lies higher, have no luſtre in his ſight; no room in his pre-engaged imagination: it is all a ſuperfluous waſte. When therefore his monarch dies, he is left in darkneſs: his ſun is ſet: it is the night of ambition with him; which naturally damps him into reflection; and fills that reflection with awful thoughts.

With reverence then be it ſpoken, what can God in his ordinary means do more to turn his affections into their right channel, and ſend them forward to their proper end? Providence, by his king's deceaſe, takes away the very ground on which his deluſion roſe: it ſinks before him: his error is ſupplanted, nor

nor has his folly whereon to ſtand, but muſt return, like the dove in the deluge, to his own boſom again. By this he is convinced that his ultimate point of view is not only vain in its nature, but vain in fact: it not only may, but has actually failed him. What then is he under the neceſſity of doing, this boundary of his ſight being removed? Either he muſt look forward (and what is beyond it but God?) or he muſt cloſe his eyes in darkneſs, and ſtill repoſe his truſt in things which he has experienced to be vain. Such accidents, therefore, however fatal to his ſecular, are the mercy of God to his eternal intereſt; and ſay, with the ſacred text, *Set your affections on things above, and not on things on the earth.**

If even kings cannot extract perfect happineſs from things below; if the groſs, unſubſtantial, and fleeting enjoyments of life are in their own nature incapable of affording pure, ſolid and laſting felicity, muſt we not all deſpair of it? Yet ſuch a happineſs we deſire; ſuch we need; nay, ſuch we muſt have; or our very exiſtence will become our curſe, and all our powers of enjoyment but capacities of pain. And where ſhall we ſeek for it? where, but in the ſupreme Good? Let us *lay up for ourſelves treaſures in heaven, and be rich towards God;* and then we ſhall live in ſtate-affluence, and conſummate felicity, when crowns, and thrones, and kings, nay, when ſtars, and ſuns, and worlds are ſunk into promiſcuous ruin.

But though crowns, and thrones, and kings, though ſtars, and ſuns, and worlds ſink into promiſcuous ruin, there is one gift of heaven to mankind which ſhall ſurvive; which ſhall flouriſh and reign for ever; a gift little eſteemed or ſolicited, and which makes no brilliant figure in mortal eyes; I mean religion—Religion! Thou brighteſt ornament of human nature! Thou faireſt image of the divine! Thou ſacred ſpark of celeſtial fire, which now glimmers with but a feeble luſtre; but will ſhine bright in the night of affliction;

* Dr. Young's True Eſtimate of Human Life, p. 59, 60.

tion; will irradiate the thick glooms of death, and blaze out into immortality in its native element! This will be an unfailing ſource of happineſs, through the revolutions of eternal ages.—May I be the man to whom heaven ſhall beſtow this moſt precious gift of divine bounty! and let crowns and kingdoms be ſcattered with an undiſtinguiſhing hand to the worthleſs and the brave, to the wiſe man and the fool; I will not murmur, envy, nor deſpond. Theſe majeſtic trifles are not the teſts of real worth, nor the badges of heaven's favourites: it is religion that marks out the happy man; that diſtinguiſhes the heir of an unfading crown; who, when the dubious conflict of life is over, *ſhall inherit all things*, and ſit in triumph for ever with the King of kings, and Lord of lords.

If majeſty has any charms to a mind truly noble; if dominion has any attractive influence upon a benevolent ſpirit; it muſt be as it affords a more extenſive ſphere of beneficence, and yields the generous, diſintereſted, god-like pleaſure of making multitudes happy. This may reconcile a mind intrinſically great to the ſelf-denial of a court, to the cares of government, and render the burden of a crown tolerable. And in this reſpect, how happy and illuſtrious was our late king! It was an honour which could fall to the lot of but few of his ſubjects, to have ſuch intimate acceſs to the royal preſence, as to furniſh materials for a panegyric upon his perſonal and private virtues; but his public and regal virtues diffuſed their beams to every territory of his vaſt dominions, and ſhone with efficacious, though gentle force, even upon us, in theſe remote ends of the earth. His public virtues as a king, thouſands atteſt and celebrate in every region of the world. Theſe we know, of theſe we have had a long and delightful experience for four-and-thirty years. Theſe therefore we can juſtly celebrate: and to theſe I ſhall confine myſelf; though I am not altogether uninformed of ſome amiable anecdotes of his majeſty's perſonal virtue in private life.

Can

Can the Britiſh annals, in the compaſs of ſeventeen hundred years, produce a period more favourable to liberty, peace, proſperity, commerce, and religion? In this happy reign, the prerogative meditated no invaſions upon the rights of the people; nor attempted to exalt itſelf above the law. George the Great, but unambitious, conſulted the rights of the people as well as of the crown; and claimed no powers but ſuch as were granted to him by the conſtitution: and what is the conſtitution but the voluntary compact of ſovereign and ſubject? and is not this the foundation of their mutual obligations? The commons who, from their ſituation in the various parts of the kingdom, are preſumed to be beſt acquainted with its ſtate, always found majeſty condeſcending to leave the intereſts of the country to their deliberations; and ready to aſſent to all their ſalutary propoſals. The times when parliaments were a troubleſome reſtraint are forgotten, or remembered with patriot-indignation. The monarch himſelf frowned upon the principles of arbitrary power; and was an advocate for the liberties of the people. His parliament were his faithful counſellors; to whom he communicated his meaſures, with all the frankneſs and confidence natural to conſcious integrity. In an ariſtocracy the Houſe of Lords could hardly enjoy more authority and independence, nor the Houſe of Commons in a democracy more freedom of ſpeech and determination, but far leſs dignity and unanimity, than under the monarchy of George the Second. In his were united the advantages of all forms of government; free from the inconveniences peculiar to each in a ſtate of ſeparation. Happy! thrice happy, to live under a reign ſo gentle and auſpicious! How different would have been our ſituation under the baleful influence of the ill-boding name of Stuart!

Fond of peace, and tender of the life and blood of man, our late moſt gracious ſovereign never engaged in war, but with compaſſionate reluctance, and with the

the unanimous approbation of his people. He drew the ſword, not to gratify his own ambition or avarice, or to revenge a perſonal injury; but to defend the rights of his ſubjects, to relieve the oppreſſed, and to reſtrain and chaſtiſe the diſturbers and tyrants of the world. He always aimed the thunder of Britain againſt the guilty head: but innocence had nothing to fear from the terrors of his hands. French perfidy and Auſtrian ingratitude rouſed his generous reſentment: but the merit of Frederic, the Pruſſian hero, the ſecond champion of liberty and the proteſtant religion, when oppreſſed by confederate kingdoms and empires, eraſed the memory of paſt differences, and made him his friend and ally.

What a vigilant, fatherly care did he extend to the infant colonies of Britain, expoſed in this ſavage wilderneſs! Hence the ſafety our once defenceleſs frontiers now enjoy. Hence the reduction of that mongrel race of French and Indian ſavages, who would have been the eternal enemies of humanity, peace, religion, and Britons. And hence the glory of Amherſt and Wolfe; and the addition of Canada to the Britiſh empire in America. Surely the name of George the Second muſt be dear in theſe reſcued provinces, and particularly in Naſſau-Hall, while peace and ſafety are eſteemed bleſſings, while the terrors of a barbarous war are ſhocking to humanity, and while gratitude lives in an American breaſt. And George the Third will be dearer to us, as he bears the ever memorable name of our great deliverer.

He never uſurped the prerogative of heaven, by aſſuming the ſovereignty of conſcience, or the conduct of the human underſtanding, in matters of faith and religious ſpeculation. He had deeply imbibed the principles of liberty; and could well diſtinguiſh between the civil rights of ſociety and the ſacred rights of religion. He knew the nature of man and of Chriſtianity too well, to imagine that the determinations

minations of human authority, or the ſanctions of penal laws, could convince the mind of one divine truth or duty; or that the impoſition of uniformity in minute points of faith, or in the forms of worſhip and eccleſiaſtical government, was conſiſtent with free inquiry and the rights of private judgment; without which, genuine chriſtianity cannot, though the external grandeur of the church may flouriſh. In his reign the ſtate was not the dupe of aſpiring churchmen, but the guardian of Chriſtians in general; nor was the ſecular arm the engine of eccleſiaſtical vengeance, but the defence of the Diſſenter as well as the Conformiſt; of the toleration, as well as the eſtabliſhment. His reign was not ſtained with blood, ſhed by the ferocious hand of blind bigotry: but the thoughts, the tongue, and the pen were free; and truth was armed only with her own gentle and harmleſs weapons; thoſe weapons with which ſhe has always ſpread her conqueſts, in oppoſition to fires and racks; to the tortures of death, and to the powers of earth and hell. Long may Britons continue free in a world of ſlaves! And long may a George adorn the throne, and guard the ſacred rights of conſcience!

Was ever king more beloved by his people? Was ever government more deeply founded in the hearts of its ſubjects? Whatever factions have embroiled the nation; whatever clamours have been raiſed againſt the miniſtry; whatever popular ſuſpicions of the abilities or integrity of his ſervants; ſtill the king was the favourite of all; he was the center in which all parties were united.

Rebellion indeed (to the horror and ſurpriſe of poſterity let it be known!) the moſt unnatural, unprovoked rebellion preſumed to lift up its head even under his gracious reign, and attempted to transfer to a deſpicable pretender the crown conferred upon him by a free people. But how gently, and yet how effectually was the monſter quelled! And how hap-

py have been the conſequences to thouſands; particularly to the brave miſguided Highlanders; who by the munificence of that very king they riſked their lives to depoſe, now taſte the ſweets of liberty and property; and need no farther argument in favour of the illuſtrious houſe of Hanover.*

The evening of his life was the meridian of his glory; and death ſeized him on the ſummit of human greatneſs. What illuſtrious victories have attended his arms in every quarter of the globe? Aſia and Africa, as well as Europe and America, have trembled at his name; and felt the force of Britiſh revenge, executed by his righteous hand. What a ſhining figure will the three laſt years, the æra of Britiſh glory, make in the hiſtory of the world! And how will they at once eternize and endear the name of George the Second!

How bloody and extenſive has been the preſent war! And how important the intereſts at ſtake! It has ſpread over both the old and new continent, like an all-devouring conflagration. Nations have bled in a thouſand veins; and the precious blood of man has ſtreamed by ſea and land, ſhed by the ſavage hand of man. The balance of power, the liberty, the peace, and religion of Europe, as well as the independency, the freedom, the commerce, and the territories of Britain and her colonies, have been the prize in diſpute; a prize equal to the whole world to us. And how gloomy and ill-boding was the aſpect

* The diſſolution of the Highland Clans, thoſe petty tyrannies, upon terms not diſadvantageous to the Chiefs themſelves, and highly agreeable to their vaſſals: the opening a communication into thoſe once inacceſſible regions by public roads; the eſtabliſhment of proteſtant miſſionaries and Engliſh ſchools; and the introduction of manufactories, ſupported by the royal bounty, and particularly by the income of the eſtates confiſcated in the laſt rebellion;—theſe have been the gentle but effectual expedients to extirpate popery and rebellion, under the adminiſtration of George the Second.—Theſe were agreeable to ſo mild a reign; and theſe have already done infinitely more to accompliſh this patriotic and chriſtian deſign, than all the ſevere, prepoſterous meaſures of former ages.

pect of our affairs in the firſt years of this war! The people factious, clamorous, and exaſperated! The miniſtry divided, improvident, and dilatory! Commanders imprudently brave and fool-hardy, or weak and daſtardly! What abortive ſchemes and blaſted expeditions! What ſanguine hopes and mortifying diſappointments! What pompous undertakings and inglorious reſults! What Britiſh, un-Britiſh gaſconade and cowardice, boaſting and timidity! And what Gallic bravery and ſucceſs! (*Proh curia! inverſique mores!*) What depredations and barbarities, what deſertion and conſternation upon our frontiers, through a length of above a thouſand miles! What downcaſt airs on every countenance! What trembling expectations in every heart! But in that anxious, dubious criſis, George was alive! (Let both ſides the Atlantic reſound with praiſes, let every Britiſh heart glow with gratitude to the Sovereign of the univerſe, who prolonged the royal life, and preſerved his capacities unimpaired in the decline of nature!—George was alive!) And with a ſteady, ſkilful hand managed the helm in the threatning ſtorm, and conducted the ſinking ſtate, in which our All was embarked, within ſight of the harbour of peace, ſafety, and glory, before he reſigned the charge. His gracious ear was open to the voice of the people, when he received the illuſtrious Pitt to ſo great a ſhare of the adminiſtration. And what a happy and glorious revolution have we ſince ſeen in the ſchemes of policy and the events of war! Had heaven puniſhed a guilty nation, by removing their guardian in that period of diſcord, languor, dejection, and mortification, while the heir of the crown was in his minority, how diſmal might have been the conſequences! Indeed we could have ſincerely paid to ſo good a king that eaſtern compliment, *O king, live for ever!* for never, O lamented George! never could thy ſubjects be weary of thee. But ſince the mighty muſt fall, as well as the feeble; ſince George, the auguſt and well-beloved,

muſt

muſt die, how great the mercy, that the melancholy period was ſo long delayed! It would be ingratitude, it would be impiety, it would be atheiſm, not to acknowledge the agency of Providence in ſo important an event.

George, our father, is no more!—No more, I mean, the ornament of the Britiſh throne: no more the benefactor of mortals: no more the inhabitant of earth. His precious duſt is ere now depoſited with his royal predeceſſors, where majeſty lies in ruins:* and we doubt not but the laſt honours have been performed to his venerable remains, agreeable to the gratitude and generoſity of the nation, and the munificent prince who inherits his crown and kingdom. And is this ſenſeleſs duſt all that is left of the greateſt of kings? Has he ſuffered a total extinction of being? Is he entirely dead to himſelf, to the univerſe, and to God?—No, he lives! He greatly lives the life of immortals! He lives in the immenſe region of ſpirits, where monarchs and kings are private men: where all the ſuperficial diſtinctions of birth, riches, power and majeſty, are loſt for ever; and all the diſtinction that remains, ariſes from virtue and vice —from our having acted our part well or ill in the ſtation where we are fixed; whether on the throne of majeſty, in the chains of ſlavery, or in the intermediate claſſes of life: there royalty appears diſrobed and uncrowned before him, *who regardeth not the rich more than the poor:* there triumphant tyranny, that bade defiance to human power, is blaſted and degraded by the frown of Omnipotence: and there, theſe rulers of men, who were the ſervants of God, are advanced to a higher ſphere of dominion and beneficence;

* In Weſtminſter Abbey.

" That ancient, ſacred, and illuſtrious dome,
" Where ſoon or late fair Albion's heroes come,
" From camps and courts, tho' great, and wiſe, and juſt,
" To feed the worm, and moulder into duſt;
" That ſolemn manſion of the royal dead,
" Where paſſing ſlaves o'er ſleeping monarchs tread."

Young's Laſt Day.

neficence; and the badges of earthly majeſty are ſuperfluous to their dignity, and would but conceal their real worth. There they are clothed with *the robes of ſalvation, and the garments of praiſe*, and wear crowns of unfading glory, infinitely brighter than thoſe which the gold, and gems, and glittering trifles of earth can compoſe. There our charity would place our departed ſovereign, in a ſtation as much ſuperior to that of king of Great Britain, as an angel to a man. But it is not for mortals to pry into the inviolable ſecrets of the inviſible world.

When we view him in this light, the medium in which perſons and things appear in eternity, we no longer revere the king. The crown, the ſceptre, and all the regalia of earthly majeſty, vaniſh. But we behold ſomething more venerable, more majeſtic, more divine—The immortal! the great ſpirit ſtript of all the empty parade and pageantry of outward ſhew, and clothed with all the God-like regalia of its own nature! illuſtrious in its own intrinſic dignity! This view of kings and emperors does not diminiſh, but heighten and brighten their majeſty. This is the moſt venerable and ſtriking attitude in which kings and emperors themſelves can appear; though in this view peaſants and ſlaves claim an equality with them. All equally immortal! And what renders the nature of man, or even of angels, ſo important, ſo noble, ſo divine, as immortality! This makes the man infinitely ſuperior to the monarch; and advances the offſpring of the duſt to a kind of equality with the natives of heaven.

But though George ſtill lives to himſelf, to the univerſe, and to God (for all live to him) yet to his once-loved kingdoms he is no more. Here again, I muſt retract the melancholy thought—He ſtill lives, he ſtill adorns the throne, he ſtill bleſſes the world, in the perſon of his royal deſcendant and ſucceſſor. And if the early appearance of genius, humanity, condeſcenſion, the ſpirit of liberty and love of his people;

if

if Britiſh birth, education, and connections; if the favourable prepoſſeſſions and high expectations of the nation; if the preſent glory and terror of the Britiſh arms; if the wiſhes and prayers of every lover of his country, ſignify any thing, or have any efficacy, George the Third will reign like George the Second.

What then remains, but that we transfer to him the loyalty, duty, and affection, we were wont to pay to his amiable predeceſſor! He aſcends the throne in the prime of life and vigour, at a juncture more honourable and glorious than Britain, perhaps, or America, has ever ſeen. He had early the example of the beſt of kings before his eyes, as a finiſhed model of government, upon principles truly Britiſh. And this has received a powerful ſanction from the example and inſtructions of his royal mother, the honour of her ſex; who has made ſo ſhining and amiable a figure in the Britiſh court, ever ſince her firſt appearance. He has able generals in the field; able admirals in the navy; a navy perhaps equal to the united fleets of the univerſe; and able counſellors in the cabinet. His ſubjects numerous, rich, free, brave, loyal and affectionate: his enemies defeated, diſpirited, exhauſted, diſappointed in their laſt efforts, and baffled in their forlorn hope: the commerce of Britain as extenſive as the globe, and collecting the riches of the world from every ſoil and climate. In this promiſing ſituation of affairs, what a long, happy and glorious reign have we in proſpect! How may we congratulate the contemporaries of our young king, who enter into public life as he aſcends the throne, and are likely to ſhare in the honours and felicities of his adminiſtration! And with what ardent gratitude and devotion ſhould we bow the knee to him, *by whom kings reign and princes decree juſtice*, who opens ſo bright and glorious a proſpect! If the agency of the Moſt High, *who ruleth in the kingdoms of men, and giveth them to whomſoever he pleaſeth*, be ungratefully overlooked, our loyalty is no longer a virtue:

a virtue: it loſes its worth; and degenerates into a mere compliment to the creature, at the expence of the Creator's honour. It is acknowledging the deputy, but rejecting the conſtituent. †

But notwithſtanding this favourable and promiſing poſture of affairs, methinks we cannot make a tranſition from reign to reign without ſome ſuſpenſe. We are paſſing into a new ſtate of political exiſtence; entering upon a ſtrange, untried period; and it is natural to be a little damped at our firſt entrance.—The changes of life are ſo frequent and unexpected, and the courſe of human affairs ſo ſeldom runs on in a ſteady

† Thus agreeable and encouraging did the dawn of the preſent reign appear to me, before any public act had confirmed thoſe favourable anticipations. But ſince I have found that one of the very firſt acts of government was "A proclamation for the encouragement of piety and virtue, and for preventing of vice, profaneneſs and immorality;" the tranſport of my mind would almoſt conſtrain me to put on the heirs of a prophet; and, without my uſual diffidence as to futurities, to foretel the increaſing glories and felicities of the beginning adminiſtration.—Hail! deſponding religion! Lift up thy drooping head, and triumph! Virtue, thou heaven-born exile, return to court. Young George invites thee: George declares himſelf thy early friend and patron, and promiſes "to diſtinguiſh perſons of piety and virtue on all occaſions by marks of royal favour." Vice, thou triumphant monſter! with all thy infernal train, retire, abſcond, and fly to thy native hell! Young George forbids thee to appear at court, in the army, in the navy, or any of thy uſual haunts, and rouſes the powers of his kingdoms againſt thee. Sure this cannot be an empty flouriſh, at firſt appearance on the ſtage. Certainly this muſt be the honeſt declaration of a heart long a ſecret friend to religion and virtue; and now impatient of ſilence. And if ſo, what happy days are before us, when religion and George ſhall reign!

Aſpice, venturo lætentur ut omnia ſæclo!
Jam redit & Virgo, redeunt Saturnia regna:
Jam nova progenies cœlo demittitur alto ——
Te Duce, ſi qua manent ſceleris veſtigia noſtri,
Irrita perpetua ſolvent formidine terras——
Pacatumque reges patriis virtutibus orbem.

Virg. Eclog. iv.

It is impoſſible to be calm under ſuch a preſage. Such a preſage renders the bleſſings we ſhall receive under the reign of George the Third, almoſt as ſure as thoſe we have received under that of George the Second; and I am ready to retract all I have ſaid above in the language of diffidence and uncertainty.

a ſteady uniform tenor for a length of years, that we can be certain of almoſt nothing but what is paſt. The moſt promiſing poſture of affairs may put on another form; and all the honours and acquiſitions of a well-conducted and ſucceſsful war, may be inglorioufly loſt by the intrigues of negociation and a diſhonourable peace. The beſt of kings (with all due deference to majeſty be it ſpoken) may have evil counſellors; and evil counſellors may have the moſt miſchievous influence, notwithſtanding the wiſdom and goodneſs of the ſovereign.

But may not even this anxious contingency be productive of good, by exciting us more powerfully to the duty of Chriſtians and good ſubjects?

Are the kingdoms of men forlorn outcaſt orphans, diſcarded by their heavenly Father; or independent, ſelf-ſufficient ſovereignties, capable of managing themſelves by their own power and policy? Or, are they not rather little provinces or diſtricts of Jehovah's immenſe empire, in which he preſides, and manages all their affairs? Are kings abſolute and ſelf-ſupported? Or, are they not ſuſtained by him who is the ſupport of archangels? Does *the prayer of a righteous man avail much?* Or is it but empty breath, of no efficacy? A light much more obſcure than that of chriſtianity has enabled heathens to anſwer ſuch queſtions as theſe. Since "then the Moſt High ruleth in the kingdoms of men;" and ſince prayer is inveſted with (ſhall I dare aſſert it?) a kind of almighty importunity, ſhall we not often appear in the poſture of petitioners at the throne of grace for our young king? In praying for this one great perſonage, we intercede not only for him, but for ourſelves and millions on both ſides the Atlantic; not only for individuals but for nations, for Europe and America, for the world! And may petitions of ſuch immenſe import never languiſh into ſpiritleſs, complimental formalities! May they exhauſt all the vigour of our ſouls, and be always animated with the united ardors of devotion, patriotiſm and loyalty! As

As good ſubjects, whatever our preſent or future ſtations may be in ſociety, or in whatever territory of his majeſty's dominions we may act our part on the ſtage of life, let the principles of loyalty and liberty, let cheerful obedience to our king, and a diſintereſted love to our country, let that generous virtue, public ſpirit, inſpire our hearts, and appear in all our conduct. Let us *be ſubject, not for wrath, but for conſcience ſake.* Let our obedience be, not a ſervile artifice to eſcape puniſhment; not the mercenary cringing of ambition or avarice; not the fulſome affected complaiſance of flattery; but the voluntary offering of an honeſt and ſincere heart. Let this always be an eſſential part of our virtue, our religion, and whatever we eſteem moſt ſacred.

To you, my dear pupils, the hope, the joy, and the ornament of your country; who, if the wiſhes and expectations of your parents, your friends, your tutors, and the public, be accompliſhed, will yet make an important figure in life; to you I muſt particularly addreſs myſelf on this melancholy occaſion, with all the affectionate ſolicitude and earneſtneſs of a father's heart; and while only my voice ſounds in your ears, imagine you hear the voice of your other tutors, of the truſtees of this inſtitution, of your country and your God, inculcating upon you the ſame exhortation.

While I invite you to drop your filial tears over the ſacred duſt of our common father, who has hitherto cheriſhed your tender years, I cannot but congratulate you once more upon your being coevals with George the Third; and that you will date your entrance upon public life ſo near the time of his acceſſion to the royal ſeat of his anceſtors. The happy ſubjects of George the Second will ſoon give place to you, and viſit their beloved king in the manſions of the dead. But long may your king and you live, and many happy days may you ſee together.

You have a king, who has already taught you how to live, and recommended piety and virtue to you from the throne. Let this therefore be your firſt care. This will qualify you for both worlds, and render you at once good ſubjects to your earthly ſovereign, and to his Maſter and yours in heaven. The Chriſtian cannot but be a patriot. He, who loves all mankind, even his enemies, muſt certainly love his country. The Chriſtian cannot but be a good ſubject. He who loves his neighbour as himſelf, muſt certainly love his ſovereign: and he who *fears God*, will not fail to *honour the king*.

Let every ſoul be ſubject to the higher powers. This, my dear youth, this is the great precept of chriſtianity, which this day demands your attention. From this day cheriſh a public ſpirit, and dedicate yourſelves to the ſervice of your king and country. Whatever character you may hereafter ſuſtain, you will not be ſo inſignificant as to be incapable of any ſervice to your ſovereign and fellow-ſubjects. Whether the health, the liberty and property, or the ſpiritual intereſts of mankind, be the object of your future profeſſion; whether you chooſe the peaceful vale of retirement, or the buſy ſcenes of active life, remember, you will ſtill have connections with the throne. You are parts of that great community over which his majeſty preſides: and the good of the whole, as well as the eaſe, honour and proſperity of his government, will in ſome meaſure depend upon your performing your parts well. Civil ſociety is ſo complicated a ſyſtem, and concludes ſo many remote, as well as intimate connections, references, and mutual dependencies, that the leaſt irregularity or defect in the minuteſt ſpring, may diſorder and weaken the whole machine. Therefore it becomes you to know your own importance to your king and country, that you may exert your influences in your reſpective ſpheres, to execute all his patriot deſigns. Let your literary acquiſitions, your fortunes, and even your lives

lives be ſacred to him, when his royal pleaſure demands them for the ſervice of your country. This you muſt do, or turn rebels againſt your own hearts and conſciences. I well know you cannot be diſaffected, or even uſeleſs ſubjects from principle. Your education, both at home and in Naſſau-Hall, has invincibly pre-engaged your inclination, your reaſon, and your conſcience, in favour of our incomparable conſtitution, and the ſucceſſion in the Hanover-family: of liberty, the Proteſtant religion and George the Third, which are inſeparably united. Therefore act up to your principles, practiſe according to your political creed, and then my moſt benevolent wiſhes, nay, the higheſt wiſhes of your king and fellow-ſubjects, will be amply accompliſhed in you. Then you will give the world an honorable and juſt ſpecimen of the morals and politics inculcated in the College of New-Jerſey; and convince them, that it is a ſeminary of loyalty, as well as learning and piety; a nurſery for the ſtate, as well as the church. Such may it always continue! You all concur in your cordial Amen.

SERMON LXI.

RELIGION AND *PATRIOTISM* THE CONSTITUENTS OF A GOOD *SOLDIER*.*

2 SAM. x. 12. *Be of good courage, and let us play the men for our people, and for the cities of our God: And the Lord do that which ſeemeth him good.*

AN hundred years of peace and liberty in ſuch a world as this, is a very unuſual thing; and yet our country has been the happy ſpot that has been diſtin-

* Preached to Captain Overton's Independent Company of Volunteers, raiſed in Hanover County, Virginia, Auguſt 17, 1755.

diſtinguiſhed with ſuch a long ſeries of bleſſings, with little or no interruption. Our ſituation in the middle of the Britiſh Colonies, and our ſeparation from the French, thoſe eternal enemies of liberty and Britons, on the one ſide by the vaſt Atlantic; and on the other by a long ridge of mountains, and a wide extended wilderneſs, have for many years been a barrier to us; and while other nations have been involved in war, we have not been alarmed with the ſound of the trumpet, nor ſeen garments rolled in blood.

But now the ſcene is changed: now we begin to experience in our turn the fate of the nations of the earth. Our territories are invaded by the power and perfidy of France; our frontiers ravaged by mercileſs ſavages, and our fellow-ſubjects there murdered with all the horrid arts of Indian and Popiſh torture. Our general, unfortunately brave, is fallen, an army of 1300 choice men routed, our fine train of artillery taken, and all this (oh mortifying thought!) all this by four or five hundred daſtardly, inſidious barbarians!

Theſe calamities have not come upon us without warnings. We were long ago apprized of the ambitious ſchemes of our enemies, and their motions to carry them into execution: and had we taken timely meaſures, they might have been cruſhed before they could have arrived at ſuch a formidable height. But how have we generally behaved in ſuch a critical time? Alas! our country has been ſunk in a deep ſleep: a ſtupid ſecurity has unmanned the inhabitants: they could not realize a danger at the diſtance of two or three hundred miles: they would not be perſuaded that even French Papiſts could ſeriouſly deſign us an injury: and hence little or nothing has been done for the defence of our country in time, except by the compulſion of authority. And now, when the cloud thickens over our heads, and alarms every thoughtful mind with its near approach,

multitudes,

multitudes, I am afraid, are ſtill diſſolved in careleſs ſecurity, or enervated with an effeminate, cowardly ſpirit. When the melancholy news firſt reached us concerning the fate of our army, then we ſaw how natural it is for the preſumptuous to fall into the oppoſite extreme of unmanly deſpondence and conſternation; and how little men could do in ſuch a panic for their own defence. We have alſo ſuffered our poor fellow-ſubjects in the frontier counties to fall a helpleſs prey to blood-thirſty ſavages, without affording them proper aſſiſtance, which as members of the ſame body politic they had a right to expect. They might as well have continued in a ſtate of nature as be united in ſociety, if in ſuch an article of extreme danger they are left to ſhift for themſelves. The bloody barbarians have exerciſed on ſome of them the moſt unnatural and leiſurely tortures; and others they have butchered in their beds, or in ſome unguarded hour. Can human nature bear the horror of the ſight! See yonder! the hairy ſcalps clotted with gore! the mangled limbs! Women ripped up! the heart and bowels ſtill palpitating with life, and ſmoking on the ground! See the ſavages ſwilling their blood, and imbibing a more outrageous fury with the inhuman draught! Sure theſe are not men; they are not beaſts of prey; they are ſomething worſe; they muſt be infernal furies in human ſhape. And have we tamely looked on, and ſuffered them to exerciſe theſe helliſh barbarities upon our fellow-men, our fellow-ſubjects, our brethren! Alas! with what horror muſt we look upon ourſelves, as being little better than acceſſaries to their blood!

And ſhall theſe ravages go on unchecked? Shall Virginia incur the guilt, and the everlaſting ſhame of tamely exchanging her liberty, her religion, and her all, for arbitrary Gallic power, and for Popiſh ſlavery, tyranny, and maſſacre? Alas! are there none of her children, that enjoyed all the bleſſings of her peace, that will eſpouſe her cauſe, and befriend her now

now in the time of her danger? Are Britons utterly degenerated by ſo ſhort a remove from their mother-country? Is the ſpirit of patriotiſm entirely extinguiſhed among us? And muſt I give thee up for loſt, O my country! and all that is included in that important word? Muſt I look upon thee as a conquered, enſlaved province of France, and the range of Indian ſavages? My heart breaks at the thought. And muſt ye, our unhappy brethren in our frontiers, muſt ye ſtand the ſingle barriers of a ravaged country, unaſſiſted, unbefriended, unpitied? Alas! muſt I draw theſe ſhocking concluſions?

No; I am agreeably checked by the happy, encouraging proſpect now before me. Is it a pleaſing dream? Or do I really ſee a number of brave men, without the compulſion of authority, without the proſpect of gain, voluntarily aſſociated in a company, to march over trackleſs mountains, the haunts of wild beaſts, or fiercer ſavages, into an hideous wilderneſs, to ſuccour their helpleſs fellow-ſubjects, and guard their country? Yes, gentlemen, I ſee you here upon this deſign; and were you all united to my heart by the moſt endearing ties of nature or friendſhip, I could not wiſh to ſee you engaged in a nobler cauſe; and whatever the fondneſs of paſſion might carry me to, I am ſure my judgment would never ſuffer me to perſuade you to deſert it. You all generouſly put your lives in your hands; and ſundry of you have nobly diſengaged yourſelves from the ſtrong and tender ties that twine about the heart of a father, or a huſband, to confine you at home in inglorious eaſe, and ſneaking retirement from danger, when your country calls for your aſſiſtance. While I have you before me, I have high thoughts of a Virginian; and I entertain the pleaſing hope that my country will yet emerge out of her diſtreſs, and flouriſh with her uſual bleſſings. I am gratefully ſenſible of the unmerited honour you have done me, in making choice of me to addreſs you upon ſo ſingular and important an occaſion:

caſion: and I am ſure I bring with me a heart ardent to ſerve you and my country, though I am afraid my inability, and the hurry of my preparations, may give you reaſon to repent your choice. I cannot begin my addreſs to you with more proper words than thoſe of a great general, which I have read to you: *Be of good courage, and play the men for* your *people, and for the cities of* your *God: and the Lord do what ſeemeth him good.*

My preſent deſign is, to illuſtrate and improve the ſundry parts of my text, as they lie in order; which you will find rich in ſundry important inſtructions, adapted to this occaſion.

The words were ſpoken juſt before a very threatening engagement by Joab, who had long ſerved under that pious hero king David, as the general of his forces, and had ſhewn himſelf an officer of true courage, conducted with prudence. The Ammonites, a neighbouring nation, had frequent hoſtilities with the Jews, had ungratefully offered indignities to ſome of David's courtiers whom he had ſent to condole their king upon the death of his father, and congratulate his acceſſion to the crown. Our holy religion teaches us to bear perſonal injuries without private revenge: but national inſults and indignities ought to excite the public reſentment. Accordingly, king David, when he heard that the Ammonites, with their allies, were preparing to invade his territories, and carry their injuries ſtill farther, ſent Joab his general, with his army, to repel them, and avenge the affronts they had offered his ſubjects. It ſeems the army of the enemy were much more numerous than David's: their mercenaries from other nations were no leſs than 31,000 men; and no doubt the Ammonites themſelves were a ſtill greater number. Theſe numerous forces were diſpoſed in the moſt advantageous manner, and ſurrounded Joab's men, that they might attack them both in flank and front at once, and cut them all off, leaving no way for them to eſcape.

eape. Prudence is of the utmoſt importance in the conduct of an army: and Joab, in this critical ſituation, gives a proof how much he was maſter of it, and diſcovers the ſteady compoſure of his mind while thus ſurrounded with danger. He divides his army, and gives one party to his brother Abiſhai, who commanded next to him, and the other he kept the command of himſelf, and reſolves to attack the Syrian mercenaries, who ſeemed the moſt formidable; he gives orders to his brother in the mean time to fall upon the Ammonites; and he animates him with this noble advice: *Be of good courage, and let us play the men for our people and the cities of our God*, which are now at ſtake; *And the Lord do what ſeemeth him good.*

Be of good courage, and let us play the men:—courage is an eſſential character of a good ſoldier:—not a ſavage ferocious violence:—not a fool-hardy inſenſibility of danger, or headſtrong raſhneſs to ruſh into it:—not the fury of inflamed paſſions, broke looſe from the government of reaſon: but calm, deliberate, rational courage; a ſteady, judicious, thoughtful fortitude: the courage of a man, and not of a tyger: ſuch a temper as Addiſon aſcribes with ſo much juſtice to the famous Marlborough and Eugene:

> Whoſe courage dwelt not in a troubled flood
> Of mounting ſpirits and fermenting blood;—But
> Lodg'd in the ſoul, with virtue over-rul'd,
> Inflam'd by reaſon, and by reaſon cool'd.
>
> *The Campaign.*

This is true courage, and ſuch as we ought all to cheriſh in the preſent dangerous conjuncture. This will render men vigilant and cautious againſt ſurprize, prudent and deliberate in concerting their meaſures, and ſteady and reſolute in executing them. But without this they will fall into unſuſpected dangers, which will ſtrike them with wild conſternation; they will meanly ſhun dangers that are ſurmountable, or

preci-

precipitantly ruſh into thoſe that are cauſeleſs, or evidently fatal, and throw away their lives in vain.

There are ſome men who naturally have this heroic turn of mind. The wiſe Creator has adapted the natural genius of mankind with a ſurpriſing and beautiful variety to the ſtate in which they are placed in this world. To ſome he has given a turn for intellectual improvement, and the liberal arts and ſciences; to others a genius for trade; to others a dexterity in mechanics, and the ruder arts, neceſſary for the ſupport of human life: the generality of mankind may be capable of tolerable improvements in any of theſe: But it is only they whom the God of Nature has formed for them, that will ſhine in them; every man in his own province. And as God well knew what a world of degenerate, ambitious and revengeful creatures this is; as he knew that innocence could not be protected, property and liberty ſecured, nor the lives of mankind preſerved from the lawleſs hands of ambition, avarice and tyranny, without the uſe of the ſword; as he knew this would be the only method to preſerve mankind from univerſal ſlavery; he has formed ſome men for this dreadful work, and fired them with a martial ſpirit, and a glorious love of danger. Such a ſpirit, though moſt pernicious when ungoverned by the rules of juſtice and benevolence to mankind, is a public bleſſing when rightly directed: ſuch a ſpirit, under God, has often mortified the inſolence of tyrants, checked the encroachments of arbitrary power, and delivered enſlaved and ruined nations: it is as neceſſary in its place for our ſubſiſtence in ſuch a world as this, as any of the gentler geniuſes among mankind; and it is derived from the ſame divine original. He that winged the imagination of an Homer or a Milton; he that gave penetration to the mind of Newton; he that made Tubal-Cain an inſtructor of artificers in braſs and iron,*

* Gen. iv. 22.

and gave ſkill to Bezaleel and Aholiah in curious works; * nay, he that ſent out Paul and his brethren to conquer the nations with the gentler weapons of Plain Truth, miracles, and the love of a crucified Saviour; he, even that ſame gracious power, has formed and raiſed up an Alexander, a Julius Cæſar, a William† and a Marlborough, and inſpired them with this enterpriſing, intrepid ſpirit; the two firſt to ſcourge a guilty world, and the two laſt to ſave nations on the brink of ruin. There is ſomething glorious and inviting in danger to ſuch noble minds; and their breaſts beat with a generous ardour when it appears.

Our continent is like to become the ſeat of war; and we, for the future (till the ſundry European nations that have planted colonies in it, have fixed their boundaries by the ſword) have no other way left to defend our rights and privileges. And has God been pleaſed to diffuſe ſome ſparks of this martial fire through our country? I hope he has: and though it has been almoſt extinguiſhed by ſo long a peace, and a deluge of luxury and pleaſure, now I hope it begins to kindle: and may I not produce you, my brethren, who are engaged in this expedition, as inſtances of it? ‡ Well, cheriſh it as a ſacred, heaven-born fire; and let the injuries done to your country adminiſter fuel to it; and kindle it in thoſe breaſts where it has been hitherto ſmothered or inactive.

Though nature be the true origin of military courage, and it can never be kindled to a high degree where there is but a feeble ſpark of it innate; yet there are ſundry things that may improve it even in minds

* Exod. xxxv. 30, 31 *&c.*

† King William the Third, the deliverer of Britain from Popery and ſlavery, and the ſcourge of France and her haughty Grand Monarque.

‡ As a remarkable inſtance of this, I may point out to the public that heroic youth Col. Waſhington, whom I cannot but hope Providence has hitherto preſerved in ſo ſignal a manner, for ſome important ſervice to his country.

minds full of natural bravery, and animate thoſe who are naturally of an effeminate ſpirit to behave with a tolerable degree of reſolution and fortitude in the defence of their country.—I need not tell you that it is of great importance for this end that you ſhould be at peace with God and your own conſcience, and prepared for your future ſtate. Guilt is naturally timorous, and often ſtruck into a panic even with imaginary dangers; and an infidel courage, proceeding from a want of thought, or a ſtupid careleſſneſs about our welfare through an immortal duration beyond the grave, is very unbecoming a man or a chriſtian. The moſt important periods of our exiſtence, my brethren, lie beyond the grave; and it is a matter of much more concern to us what will be our doom in the world to come than what becomes of us in this. We are obliged to defend our country: and that is a ſneaking, ſordid ſoul indeed that can deſert it at ſuch a time as this: but this is not all; we are alſo obliged to take care of an immortal ſoul; a ſoul that muſt exiſt, and be happy or miſerable through all the revolutions of eternal ages. This ſhould be our firſt care; and when this is ſecured, death in its moſt ſhocking forms is but a releaſe from a world of ſin and ſorrows, and an introduction into everlaſting life and glory. But how can this be ſecured? Not by a courſe of impenitent ſinning; not by a courſe of ſtupid careleſſneſs and inaction: but by vigorous and reſolute ſtriving; by ſerious and affectionate thoughtfulneſs about our condition, and by a conſcientious and earneſt attendance upon the means that God has graciouſly appointed for our recovery. But "we are ſinners, heinous ſinners againſt a God of infinite purity and inexorable juſtice." Yes, we are ſo; and does not the poſture of penitents then become us? Is not repentance, deep, broken-hearted repentance, a duty ſuitable to perſons of our character? Undoubtedly it is: and therefore, O my countrymen, and particularly you brave men that are the occaſion of this meeting, repent:

repent: fall down upon your knees before the provoked Sovereign of heaven and earth, againſt whom you have rebelled. Diſſolve and melt in penitential ſorrows at his feet; and he will tell you *Ariſe, be of good cheer; your ſins are forgiven you.* "But will repentance make atonement for our ſins? Will our tears waſh away their guilt? Will our ſorrows merit forgiveneſs?" No, my brethren, after you have done all, you are but unprofitable ſervants: after all your ſorrows, and prayers, and tears, you deſerve to be puniſhed as obnoxious criminals: that would be a ſorry government indeed, where repentance, perhaps extorted by the ſervile fear of puniſhment, would make atonement for every offence. But *I bring you glad tidings of great joy; to you is born a Saviour*, a Saviour of no mean character; he is Chriſt the Lord. And have you never heard that he has *made reconciliation for iniquity, and brought in everlaſting righteouſneſs; that he ſuffered, the juſt for the unjuſt; that God is well-pleaſed for his righteouſneſs-ſake*, and declares himſelf willing to be reconciled to all that believe in him, and cheerfully accept him as their Saviour and Lord. Have you never heard theſe joyful tidings, O guilty, ſelf-condemned ſinners? Sure you have. Then away to Jeſus, away to Jeſus, ye whoſe conſciences are loaded with guilt; ye whoſe hearts fail within you at the thoughts of death, and the tribunal of divine juſtice; ye who are deſtitute of all perſonal righteouſneſs to procure you pardon, and recommend you to the Divine Favour: fly to Jeſus on the wings of faith, all of you, of every age and character; for you all ſtand in the moſt abſolute need of him; and without him you muſt periſh every ſoul of you. But alas! we find ourſelves utterly unable to repent and fly to Jeſus: our hearts are hard and unbelieving; and if the work depend upon us, it will for ever remain undone. True, my brethren, ſo the caſe is; but do ye not know that this guilty earth is under the diſtillings of divine grace, that Jeſus is intruſted with the influences of the

the Spirit, which can *work in you both to will and to do;* and that he is willing to *give his Holy Spirit to them that aſk him?* If you know this, you know where to go for ſtrength; therefore cry mightily to God for it. This I earneſtly recommend to all my hearers, and eſpecially to you, gentlemen, and others, that are now about generouſly to riſque your lives for your country. Account this the beſt preparative to encounter danger and death; the beſt incentive to true, rational courage. What can do you a laſting injury while you have a reconciled God ſmiling upon you from on high, a peaceful conſcience animating you within, and a happy immortality juſt before you! ſure you may bid defiance to dangers and death in their moſt ſhocking forms. You have anſwered the end of this life already by preparing for another; and how can you depart off this mortal ſtage more honourably, than in the cauſe of liberty, of religion, and your country? But if any of you are perplexed with gloomy fears about this important affair, or conſcious you are entirely unprepared for eternity, what muſt you do? Muſt you ſeek to prolong your life, and your time for preparation, by mean or unlawful ways, by a cowardly deſertion of the cauſe of your country, and ſhifting for your little ſelves, as though you had no connection with ſociety? Alas! this would but aggravate your guilt, and render your condition ſtill more perplexed and diſcouraging. Follow the path of duty wherever it leads you, for it will be always the ſafeſt in the iſſue. Diligently improve the time you have to make your calling and election ſure, and you have reaſon to hope for mercy, and grace to help in ſuch a time of need.—You will forgive me, if I have enlarged upon this point, even to a digreſſion; for I thought it of great conſequence to you all. I ſhall now proceed with more haſte.

It is alſo of great importance to excite and keep up our courage in ſuch an expedition, that we ſhould be fully ſatisfied we engage in a righteous cauſe—

and

and in a cauſe of great moment; for we cannot proſecute a ſuſpected, or a wicked ſcheme, which our own minds condemn, but with heſitation, and timorous apprehenſions; and we cannot engage with ſpirit and reſolution in a trifling ſcheme, from which we can expect no conſequences worth our vigorous purſuit. This Joab might have in view in his heroic advice to his brother; *Be of good courage*, ſays he, *and let us play the men for our people, and for the cities of our God. q. d.* We are engaged in a righteous cauſe; we are not urged on by an unbounded luſt of power or riches, to encroach upon the rights and properties of others, and diſturb our quiet neighbours: we act entirely upon the defenſive, repel unjuſt violence, and avenge national injuries; we are fighting *for our people, and for the cities of our God.* We are alſo engaged in a cauſe of the utmoſt importance. We fight for our people; and what endearments are included in that ſignificant word! our liberty, our eſtates, our lives! our king, our fellow-ſubjects, our venerable fathers, our tender children, the wives of our boſom, our friends, the ſharers of our ſouls, our poſterity to the lateſt ages! and who would not uſe his ſword with an exerted arm when theſe lie at ſtake? But even theſe are not all: we fight *for the cities of our God.* God has diſtinguiſhed us with a religion from heaven; and hitherto we have enjoyed the quiet and unreſtrained exerciſe of it: he has condeſcended to be a God to our nation, and to honour our cities with his gracious preſence, and the inſtitutions of his worſhip, the means to make us wiſe, good, and happy: but now theſe moſt invaluable bleſſings lie at ſtake; theſe are the prizes for which we contend; and muſt it not excite all our active powers to the higheſt pitch of exertion? Shall we tamely ſubmit to idolatry and religious tyranny? No, God forbid: *let us play the men*, ſince we take up arms for our people, and the cities of our God.

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I need not tell you how applicable this advice, thus paraphraſed, is to the deſign of the preſent aſſociated company. The equity of our cauſe is moſt evident. The Indian ſavages have certainly no right to murder our fellow-ſubjects, living quiet and inoffenſive in their habitations; nor have the French any power to hound them out upon us, nor to invade the territories belonging to the Britiſh crown, and ſecured to it by the faith of treaties. This is a clear caſe: and it is equally clear, that you are engaged in a cauſe of the utmoſt importance. To protect your brethren from the moſt bloody barbarities—to defend the territories of the beſt of kings againſt the oppreſſion and tyranny of arbitrary power—to ſecure the ineſtimable bleſſings of liberty, Britiſh liberty, from the chains of French ſlavery—to preſerve your eſtates, for which you have ſweat and toiled, from falling a prey to greedy vultures, Indians, prieſts, friars, and hungry Gallic ſlaves, or not more devouring flames—to guard your religion, the pure religion of Jeſus, ſtreaming uncorrupted from the ſacred fountain of the ſcriptures; the moſt excellent, rational and divine religion that ever was made known to the ſons of men; to guard ſo dear, ſo precious a religion (my heart grows warm while I mention it) againſt ignorance, ſuperſtition, idolatry, tyranny over conſcience, maſſacre, fire and ſword, and all the miſchiefs beyond expreſſion, with which Popery is pregnant—to keep from the cruel hands of Barbarians and Papiſts your wives, your children, your parents, your friends—to ſecure the liberties conveyed to you by your brave forefathers, and bought with their blood, that you may tranſmit them uncurtailed to your poſterity—Theſe are the bleſſings you contend for; all theſe will be torn from your eager graſp, if this colony ſhould become a province of France. And Virginians! Britons! Chriſtians! Proteſtants! if theſe names have any import or energy, will you not ſtrike home in ſuch a cauſe! Yes, this view of the matter muſt fire

fire you into men; methinks the cowardly ſoul muſt tremble, leſt the imprecation of the prophet fall upon him, *Curſed be the man that keepeth back his ſword from blood.* To this ſhocking, but neceſſary work, the Lord now calls you, and *curſed is he that doth the work of the Lord deceitfully;* that will not put his hand to it when it is in his power, or that will not perform it with all his might. Jer. xlviii. 10. The people of Meroz lay at home in eaſe, while their brethren were in the field, delivering their country from ſlavery. And what was their doom? *Curſe ye Meroz,* ſaid the angel of the Lord, *curſe ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof, becauſe they came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord againſt the mighty.* Judges v. 23. I count myſelf happy that I ſee ſo many of you generouſly engaged in ſuch a cauſe; but when I view it in this light, I cannot but be concerned that there are ſo few to join you. Are there but fifty or ſixty perſons in this large and populous county that can be ſpared from home for a few weeks upon ſo neceſſary a deſign, or that are able to bear the fatigues of it? Where are the friends of human nature, where the lovers of liberty and religion? Now is the time for you to come forth, and ſhew yourſelves. Nay, where is the miſer? let him ariſe and defend his Mammon, or he may ſoon have reaſon to cry out with Micah, *They have taken away my gods, and what have I more?* Where is the tender ſoul, on whom the paſſions of a huſband, a father, or a ſon, have a peculiar energy? Ariſe, and march away; you had better be abſent from thoſe you love for a little while, than ſee them butchered before your eyes, or doomed to eternal poverty and ſlavery. The aſſociation now forming is not yet complete; and if it were, it would be a glorious thing to form another. Therefore, as an advocate for your king, your fellow-ſubjects, your country, your relatives, your earthly all, I do invite and intreat all of you, who have not ſome very ſufficient reaſon againſt it, voluntarily to enliſt, and go out with

thoſe

thoſe brave ſouls, who have ſet you ſo noble an example. It will be more advantageous to you to go out in time, and more honourable to go out as volunteers, than be compelled to it by authority, when perhaps it may be too late.

The conſideration of the juſtice and importance of the cauſe may alſo encourage you to hope that the Lord of Hoſts will eſpouſe it, and render its guardians ſucceſsful, and return them in ſafety to the arms of their longing friends. The event however is in his hands; and it is much better there than if it were in yours. This thought is ſuggeſted with beautiful ſimplicity, in the remaining part of my text, *the Lord do that which ſeemeth him good.* This may be looked upon in various views; as,

1. It may be underſtood as the language of uncertainty and modeſty. *q. d.* Let us do all we can; but after all, the iſſue is uncertain; we know not, as yet, to what ſide God will incline the victory. Such language as this, my brethren, becomes us in all our undertakings; it ſounds creature-like, and God approves of ſuch ſelf-diffident humility. But to indulge ſanguine and confident expectations of victory, to boaſt when we put on our armour, as though we were putting it off, and to derive our high hopes from our own power and good management, without any regard to the providence of God, this is too lordly and aſſuming for ſuch feeble mortals; ſuch inſolence is generally mortified; and ſuch a haughty ſpirit is the forerunner of a fall. Therefore, though I do not apprehend your lives will be in any great danger in your preſent expedition to range the frontiers, and clear them of the ſkulking Indians; yet, I would not flatter you, my brethren, with too high hopes either of victory or ſafety. I cannot but entertain the pleaſing proſpect of congratulating you, with many of your friends, upon your ſucceſsful expedition, and ſafe return: and yet it is very poſſible our next interview may be in that ſtrange, untried world beyond

the grave. You are, however, in the hands of God, and he will deal with you *as it ſeemeth him good*: and I am perſuaded you would not wiſh it were otherwiſe; you would not now practically retract the petition you have ſo often offered up, *Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.*

2. This language, *the Lord do as ſeemeth him good*, may be looked upon as expreſſive of a firm perſuaſion that the event of war entirely depends upon the providence of God. *q. d.* Let us do our beſt; but after all, let us be ſenſible that the ſucceſs does not depend on us; that is entirely in the hands of an all-ruling God. That God governs the world, is a fundamental article of natural as well as revealed religion: it is no great exploit of faith to believe this: it is but a ſmall advance beyond atheiſm and downright infidelity. I know no country upon earth where I ſhould be put to the expence of argument to prove this. The heathens gave ſtriking proofs of their belief of it, by their prayers, their ſacrifices, their conſulting oracles, before they engaged in war; and by their coſtly offerings and ſolemn thankſgivings after victory. And ſhall ſuch a plain principle as this be diſputed in a chriſtian land! No; we all ſpeculatively believe it; but that is not enough; let our ſpirits be deeply impreſſed with it, and our lives influenced by it: let us live in the world as in a territory of Jehovah's empire. Carry this impreſſion upon your hearts into the wilderneſs, whither you are going. Often let ſuch thoughts as theſe recur to your minds: I am the feeble creature of God; and bleſſed be his name, I am not caſt off his hand as a diſregarded orphan to ſhift for myſelf. My life is under his care; the ſucceſs of this expedition is at his diſpoſal. Therefore, O thou all-ruling God, I implore thy protection; I confide in thy care; I cheerfully reſign myſelf, and the event of this undertaking, to thee. Which leads me to obſerve,

3. That

3. That theſe words, *the Lord do what ſeemeth him good*, may expreſs a humble ſubmiſſion to the diſpoſal of Providence, let the event turn out as it would. *q. d.* We have not the diſpoſal of the event, nor do we know what it will be: but Jehovah knows, and that's enough: we are ſure he will do what is beſt, upon the whole; and it becomes us to acquieſce: Thus, my friends, do you reſign and ſubmit yourſelves to the Ruler of the world in the preſent enterprize: He will order matters as he pleaſes; O! let him do ſo by your cheerful conſent. Let ſucceſs or diſappointment, let life or death be the iſſue, ſtill ſay, *Good is the will of the Lord, let him do what ſeemeth him good:* or if nature biaſſes your wiſhes and deſires to the favourable ſide, as no doubt it will, ſtill keep them within bounds, and reſtrain them in time, ſaying, after the example of Chriſt, *Not my will, but thine be done.* You may wiſh, you may pray, you may ſtrive, you may hope for a happy iſſue; but you muſt ſubmit; *be ſtill, and know that he is God*, and will not be preſcribed to, or ſuffer a rival in the government of the world he has made. Such a temper will be of unſpeakable ſervice to you, and you may hope God will honour it with a remarkable bleſſing: for ſubmiſſion to his will is the readieſt way to the accompliſhment of our own.

4. Theſe words, in their connection, may intimate, that, let the event be what it will, it will afford us ſatisfaction, to think that we have done the beſt we could. *q. d.* We cannot command ſucceſs; but let us do all in our power to obtain it, and we have reaſon to hope that in this way we ſhall not be diſappointed: but if it ſhould pleaſe God to render all our endeavours vain, ſtill we ſhall have the generous pleaſure to reflect that we have not been acceſſary to the ruin of our country, but have done all we could for its deliverance. So you, my brethren, have generouſly engaged in a diſintereſted ſcheme for your king and country: God does generally crown ſuch noble undertakings

dertakings with ſucceſs, and you have encouragement to hope for it: but the cauſe you have eſpouſed is the cauſe of a ſinful, impenitent country; and if God, in righteous diſpleaſure, ſhould on this account blaſt your attempt, ſtill you will have the pleaſure of reflecting upon your generous views and vigorous endeavours, and that you have done your part conſcientiouſly.

Having thus made ſome curſory remarks upon the ſundry parts of the text, I ſhall now conclude with an addreſs, firſt, to you all in general, and then to you, gentlemen and others, who have been pleaſed to invite me to this ſervice. I hope you will forgive my prolixity; my heart is full, the text is copious, and the occaſion ſingular and important. I cannot therefore diſmiſs you with a ſhort, hurrying diſcourſe.

It concerns you all ſeriouſly to reflect upon your own ſins, and the ſins of your land, which have brought all theſe calamities upon us. If you believe that God governs the world, if you do not abjure him from being the Ruler of your country, you muſt acknowledge that all the calamities of war, and the threatening appearances of famine, are ordered by his providence; there is no evil in a city or country, but the Lord hath done it. And if you believe that he is a juſt and righteous Ruler, you muſt alſo believe, that he would not thus puniſh a righteous or a penitent people. We and our countrymen are ſinners, aggravated ſinners: God proclaims that we are ſuch by his judgments now upon us, by withering fields and ſcanty harveſts, by the ſound of the trumpet and the alarm of war. Our conſciences muſt alſo bear witneſs to the ſame melancholy truth. And if my heart were properly affected, I would concur with theſe undoubted witneſſes; I would cry aloud, and not ſpare; I would lift up my voice like a trumpet, to ſhew you your tranſgreſſions and your ſins. O, my country, is not thy wickedneſs great, and thine iniquities infinite? Where is there a more ſinful ſpot to be

be found upon our guilty globe? Paſs over the land, take a ſurvey of the inhabitants, inſpect into their conduct, and what do you ſee? what do you hear? You ſee gigantic forms of vice braving the ſkies, and bidding defiance to heaven and earth, while religion and virtue is obliged to retire, to avoid public contempt and inſult: You ſee herds of drunkards ſwilling down their cups and drowning all the man within them: You hear the ſwearer venting his fury againſt God and man, trifling with that name which proſtrate angels adore, and imprecating that damnation, under which the hardieſt devil in hell trembles and groans: You ſee Avarice hoarding up her uſeleſs treaſures, diſhoneſt Craft planning her ſchemes of unlawful gain, and Oppreſſion unmercifully grinding the face of the poor: You ſee Prodigality ſquandering her ſtores, Luxury ſpreading her table, and unmanning her gueſts; Vanity laughing aloud, and diſſolving in empty, unthinking mirth, regardleſs of God and our country, of time and eternity; Senſuality wallowing in brutal pleaſures, and aſpiring with inverted ambition, to ſink as low as her four-footed brethren of the ſtall: You ſee cards more in uſe than the Bible, the backgammon table more frequented than the table of the Lord, plays and romances more read than the hiſtory of the bleſſed Jeſus. You ſee trifling and even criminal diverſions become a ſerious buſineſs; the iſſue of a horſe-race, or a cock-fight, more anxiouſly attended to than the fate of our country; or where theſe groſſer forms of vice and vanity do not ſhock your ſenſes, even there you often meet with the appearances of more refined impiety, which is equally dangerous: You hear the converſation of reaſonable creatures, of candidates for eternity, engroſſed by trifles, or vainly waſted on the affairs of time: theſe are the eternal ſubjects of converſation, even at the threſhold of the houſe of God, and on the ſacred hours devoted to his ſervice: You ſee ſwarms of prayerleſs families all over our land; ignorant, vicious children, unreſtrained

ſtrained and untaught by thoſe to whom God and nature hath entruſted their ſouls: You ſee thouſands of poor ſlaves in a Chriſtian country, the property of Chriſtian maſters, as they will be called, almoſt as ignorant of Chriſtianity as when they left the wilds of Africa: You ſee the beſt religion in all the world abuſed, neglected, diſobeyed and diſhonoured by its profeſſors; and you hear infidelity ſcattering her ambiguous hints and ſuſpicions, or openly attacking the Chriſtian cauſe with pretended argument, with inſult and ridicule: You ſee crowds of profeſſed believers, that are practical atheiſts; nominal Chriſtians, that are real heathens; many abandoned ſlaves of ſin, that yet pretend to be the ſervants of the holy Jeſus: You ſee the ordinances of the goſpel neglected by ſome, profaned by others, and attended upon by the generality with a trifling irreverence, and ſtudied unconcernedneſs. Alas! who would think that thoſe thoughtleſs aſſemblies we often ſee in our places of worſhip, are met for ſuch ſolemn purpoſes as to implore the pardon of their ſins from an injured God, and to prepare for an awful, all-important eternity! Alas! is that religion, for the propagation of which the Son of God laboured, and bled, and died; for which his apoſtles and thouſands of martyrs have ſpent their ſtrength and ſhed their blood, and on which our eternal life depends—is that religion become ſuch a trifle in our days, that men are hardly ſerious and in earneſt when they attend upon its moſt ſolemn inſtitutions? What multitudes lie in a dead ſleep in ſin all around us! You ſee them eager in the purſuit of the vanities of time, but ſtupidly unconcerned about the important realities of the eternal world juſt before them: few ſolicitous what ſhall become of them when all their connections with earth and fleſh muſt be broken, and they muſt take their flight into ſtrange, unknown regions: few lamenting their ſins: few crying for mercy and a new heart: few flying to Jeſus, or juſtly ſenſible of the importance of a Me-

a Mediator in a religion for ſinners. You may indeed ſee ſome degree of civility and benevolence towards men, and more than enough of cringing complaiſance of worms to worms, of clay to clay, of guilt to guilt: but Oh! how little ſincere homage, how little affectionate veneration for the great Lord of heaven and earth! You may ſee ſomething of duty to parents, of gratitude to benefactors, and obedience to ſuperiors: but if God be a Father, where is his honour? If he be a Maſter, where is his fear? If he be our benefactor, where is our gratitude to him! You may ſee here and there ſome inſtances of proud, ſelf-righteous virtue, ſome appearances of morality: but O! how rare is vital, evangelical religion, and true Chriſtian morality, animated with the love of God, proceeding from a new heart, and a regard to the divine authority, full of Jeſus, full of a regard to him as a Mediator, on whoſe account alone our duties can find acceptance! O, bleſſed Redeemer! what little neceſſity, what little uſe do the ſinners of our country find for thee in their religion! How many diſcourſes are delivered, how many prayers offered, how many good works are performed, in which there is ſcarce any thing of Chriſt! And this defect renders them all but ſhining ſins, glittering crimes. How few pant and languiſh for thee, bleſſed Jeſus! and can never be contented with their reformation, with their morality, with their good works, till they obtain an intereſt in thy righteouſneſs, to ſanctify all, to render all acceptable!—You may ſee children ſenſible of their dependance on their parents for their ſubſiſtence; you ſee multitudes ſenſible of their dependance on clouds and ſun, and earth, for proviſion for man and beaſt: but how few ſenſible of their dependance upon God, as the great Original, the *primum mobile* of natural cauſes, and the various wheels of the univerſe! You ſee even the dull ox knows his owner, and the ſtupid aſs his maſter's crib: you ſee the workings of gratitude even in your dog,

dog, who welcomes you home with a thouſand fondling motions: but how is Jehovah's government and agency practically denied in his own territories! How few receive the bleſſings of life as from his hand, and make him proper returns of gratitude! You ſee a withering, ravaged country around you, languiſhing under the frowns of an angry God; but how few earneſt prayers, how few penitential groans do you hear! Paſs over the land, and bring me intelligence, is not this the general character of our country! I know there are ſome happy exceptions; and I hope ſundry ſuch might be produced from among you: but is not this the prevailing character of a great majority? Does not one part or other of it belong to the generality? The moſt generous charity cannot hope the contrary, if under any ſcriptural or rational limitations. May it not be ſaid of the men of Virginia, as well as thoſe of Sodom, *they are wicked, and ſinners before the Lord exceedingly?* And thus, alas! it has been for a long time: our country has ſinned on ſecurely for above one hundred and fifty years; and one age has improved upon the vices of another. And can a land always bear up under ſuch a load of accumulated wickedneſs? Can God always ſuffer ſuch a race of ſinners to go unpuniſhed from generation to generation? May we not fear that our iniquities are now juſt full, and that he is about to thunder out his awful mandate to the executioners of his vengeance, *Put ye in the ſickle; for the harveſt is ripe; come get ye down, for the preſs is full, the vats overflow; for their wickedneſs is great.*

And is there no relief for a ſinking country? Or is it too late to adminiſter it? Is our wound incurable, that refuſeth to be healed? No, bleſſed be God; if you now turn every one of you from your evil ways, if you mourn over your ſins, and turn to the Lord with your whole hearts, then your country will yet recover. God will appear for us, and give a proſperous turn to our affairs; he has aſſured us of this

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in his own word, *At what inſtant*, ſays he, *I ſhall ſpeak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to deſtroy it; if that nation, againſt whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them.* Jer. xviii. 7, 8. Therefore, my brethren, as we have all rebelled, let us all join in unanimous repentance, and a thorough reformation. Not only your eternal ſalvation requires it, but alſo the preſervation of your country, that is now bleeding with the wounds you have given it by your ſins. The ſafety of theſe our friends, who are now engaged in ſo generous a deſign, requires it: for an army of ſaints or of heroes, cannot defend a guilty, impenitent people, ripe for the judgments of God. If you would be everlaſtingly happy, and eſcape the vengeance of eternal fire, or (to mention what may perhaps have more weight with ſome of you) if you would preſerve yourſelves, your families, your poſterity from poverty, from ſlavery, ignorance, idolatry, torture and death; if you would ſave yourſelves and them from all the infernal horrors of popery, and the ſavage tyranny of a mongrel race of French and Indian conquerors: in ſhort, if you would avoid all that is terrible, and enjoy every thing that is dear and valuable, repent and turn to the Lord. This is the only cure for our wounded country; and if you refuſe to adminiſter it in time, prepare to periſh in its ruins. If you go on impenitent in ſin, you may expect not only to be damned for ever, but (what is more terrible to ſome of you) to fall into the moſt extreme outward diſtreſs. You will have reaſon to fear not only the loſs of heaven, which ſome of you perhaps think little of, but the loſs of your eſtates, that lie ſo near your hearts. And will you not repent, when you are preſſed to it from ſo many quarters at once?

And now, my brethren, in the laſt place, I have a few parting words to offer to you who are more particularly concerned on this occaſion; and I am ſure

I ſhall addreſs you with as much affectionate benevolence as you could wiſh.

My firſt and leading advice to you is, Labour to conduct this expedition in a religious manner. Methinks this ſhould not ſeem ſtrange counſel to creatures entirely dependent upon God, and at his diſpoſal. As you are an independent company of volunteers under officers of your own chuſing, you may manage your affairs more according to your own inclinations than if you had enliſted upon the ordinary footing: and I hope you will improve this advantage for the purpoſes of religion. Let prayer to the God of your life be your daily exerciſe. When retirement is ſafe, pour out your hearts to him in ſecret; and when it is practicable, join in prayer together morning and evening in your camp. How acceptable to Heaven muſt ſuch an unuſual offering be, from that deſart wilderneſs! Maintain a ſenſe of divine Providence upon your hearts, and reſign yourſelves and all your affairs into the hands of God. You are engaged in a good cauſe, the cauſe of your people, and the cities of your God; and therefore you may the more boldly commit it to him, and pray and hope for his bleſſing. I would fain hope there is no neceſſity to take precautions againſt vice among ſuch a ſelect company: but leſt there ſhould, I would humbly recommend it to you to make this one of the article of your aſſociation, before you ſet out, That every form of vice ſhall be ſeverely diſcountenanced; and if you think proper, expoſe the offender to ſome pecuniary or corporal puniſhment. It would be ſhocking indeed, and I cannot bear the thought, that a company formed upon ſuch generous principles, ſhould commit or tolerate open wickedneſs among them; and I hope this caution is needleſs to you all, as I am ſure it is to ſundry of you.

And now, my dear friends, and the friends of your neglected country, *In the name of the Lord lift up your banners; be of good courage, and play the men for the people*

people and the cities of your God: and the Lord do what ſeemeth him good. Should I now give vent to the paſſions of my heart, and become a ſpeaker for my country, methinks I ſhould even overwhelm you with a torrent of good wiſhes, and prayers from the hearts of thouſands. May the Lord of hoſts, the God of the armies of Iſrael, go forth along with you! *May he teach your hands to war, and gird you with ſtrength to battle!* May he bleſs you with a ſafe return and long life, or a glorious death in the bed of honour, and a happy immortality! May he guard and ſupport your anxious families and friends at home, and return you victorious to their longing arms! May all the bleſſings your hearts can wiſh attend you whereever you go! Theſe are wiſhes and prayers of my heart; and thouſands concur in them: and we cannot but cheerfully hope they will be granted, through Jeſus Chriſt. Amen.

SERMON LXII.

THE *CRISIS*: OR, THE UNCERTAIN DOOM OF KINGDOMS AT PARTICULAR TIMES.*

JONAH iii. 9. *Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we periſh not!*

A State of uncertainty, a ſuſpenſe between hope and fear about a matter of importance, is a very painful and anxious ſtate. And by how much the more important and intereſting the matter, by ſo much

* Preached at Hanover, in Virginia, 28th Oct. 1756, being the day appointed by the Synod of New-York, to be obſerved as a general faſt, on account of the preſent war with France.

much the more diſtreſſing is the uncertainty. Now what can be more important, what more intereſting, than our country! Our country is a word of the higheſt and moſt endearing import: it includes our friends and relatives, our liberty, our property, our religion: in ſhort, it includes our earthly all. And when the fate of our country, and all that it includes, is dreadfully doubtful; when we are toſſed and agitated betwixt the alternate waves of hope and fear; when, upon taking a view of the preſent poſture of our affairs, we can only aſk with painful ſolicitude, *what will be the end of theſe things?* and when even the conſideration of the divine mercy upon our repentance cannot give us any aſſurance of deliverance in a political capacity, but only a peradventure, *who can tell but God will turn and repent!* when this, I ſay, is our ſituation, every mind that has the leaſt thought, muſt be agitated with many eager, dubious expectations. This is the preſent ſituation of our country; and this was the ſtate of that populous and magnificent city of Nineveh, when the words of my text were firſt ſpoken.

Nineveh was the metropolis of the Aſſyrian empire: and how prodigiouſly populous it was, you may calculate from hence, that it contained more than ſix ſcore thouſand children, that were ſo young, that they could not diſtinguiſh the right hand from the left: and the number of adults, in proportion to theſe, muſt be vaſt indeed. Its extent was no leſs than three days journey. Profane authors tell us, it was forty-ſeven miles in circumference; and that notwithſtanding its vaſt extent, it was ſurrounded with lofty walls and towers: the walls two hundred feet high, and ſo very wide, that three chariots might drive on them a-breaſt: and the towers two hundred feet in height, and fifteen hundred in number. But what became of this mighty Nineveh at laſt? Alas! it was turned into an heap of rubbiſh. Divine patience was at length wearied out; and, though the vengeance

vengeance denounced by Jonah was ſuſpended, yet that foretold by Nahum was dreadfully executed.

And what was the cauſe of this execution, and that denunciation? The cauſe of both was ſin; national, epidemical ſin, againſt an unknown God, the God of Iſrael; I ſay, againſt an unknown God: for Nineveh was an heathen city, not favoured with the knowledge of the true God by ſupernatural revelation; much leſs with the goſpel, that moſt perfect diſpenſation of divine grace towards the ſons of men. The Ninevites could not ſin with ſuch horrid aggravations as we; and yet even they could ſin to ſuch a degree, as to become utterly intolerable. They ſinned againſt the light of nature, and that ſufficed to bring down remedileſs deſtruction upon them. This is mentioned as the cauſe of the divine diſpleaſure, in Jonah's commiſſion. *Ariſe, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry againſt it; for their wickedneſs is come up before me*, Jonah i. 2. their wickedneſs has reached to heaven; and can no longer be endured. But before the fatal blow fall, let them have one warning more —Oh! how aſtoniſhing are the grace and patience of God towards a guilty people! Even when their wickedneſs has ſcaled the heavens, and come up before him, he condeſcends to give them another warning, and ſuſpends the blow for at leaſt forty days longer, to ſee if they will at length repent.

Jonah, having tried in vain to diſengage himſelf from the meſſage, is at length conſtrained to undertake it; and with the ſolemn and awful gait of a prophet, he walks from ſtreet to ſtreet, making this alarming proclamation: *Yet forty days, and Nineveh ſhall be overthrown.* Jonah iii. 4. This was the ſubſtance of his ſermon: but no doubt he ſpoke much more than is here recorded. No doubt, he produced his credentials from the God of Iſrael, and gave them the hiſtory of his reluctance to accept the commiſſion; of the ſtorm that purſued him, while attempting to make his eſcape; of his miraculous preſervation in the

the belly of a fiſh, and his deliverance thence. No doubt, he alſo let them know what was the cauſe of the divine diſpleaſure againſt them, viz. their national vices and irreligion; and he perhaps intimated, that repentance was the only poſſible method of eſcaping the threatened deſtruction. It is plain, however, they underſtood him in this ſenſe; for they actually did repent; but whether it was from the light of nature, or from Jonah's preaching, they received this direction, does not appear. *

And now, while the prophet is delivering his meſſage, their conſciences tell them how ripe they are for this dreadful doom; and the Spirit of God, no doubt, concurs, and impreſſes the conviction upon their hearts. Now, methinks, I ſee eager, gazing crowds following the prophet from ſtreet to ſtreet; paleneſs is in every countenance, and horror in every heart. Now the man of buſineſs remits his eager purſuits; the man of pleaſure is ſtruck with a damp in his thoughtleſs career: pride and grandeur lower their haughty airs; and a general horror ſpreads from the cottage to the throne. The people agree upon a public faſt: and when the emperor hears of the awful meſſage, he iſſues forth his royal edict, requiring an univerſal abſtinence from food, and a deep repentance and reformation. He enjoins all to put on ſackcloth, the habit of mourners and penitents in thoſe ages and countries; and, laying aſide his royal robes, and

* Upon ſecond thoughts, it ſeems to me that God ſaw it moſt proper to be upon the reſerve in this point; and that he did not reveal to Jonah his gracious deſign to pardon them upon their repentance; nor Jonah to the Ninevites.—That God did not reveal it to Jonah, ſeems probable from hence, that he had ſome expectation the city would be deſtroyed, though he ſaw their repentance: and hence he waited for the event, and was greatly chagrined when diſappointed. He ſeemed indeed to have preſumed what the event would be, from the known mercy and patience of God (ch. iv. 2.) but this implies, that he had no expreſs revelation for it—That Jonah did not reveal this to the Ninevites, appears from my text, where they ſpeak of the event as dreadfully uncertain, even though they ſhould repent.

and deſcending from his throne, he puts on the mortifying dreſs himſelf, and lies in the duſt. That the humiliation might be the more moving and affecting, he orders, according to the cuſtom of the time upon ſuch ſolemn occaſions, that even the beaſts, the flocks and herds, ſhould be reſtrained from food, and compelled to join, as it were, with more guilty men, in the general humiliation, and in deprecating that vengeance which was about to fall upon man and beaſt.

We have now a very moving ſight before us; a gay, magnificent city in mourning; thouſands mourning in every ſtreet: king and ſubjects, high and low, old and young, all covered in ſackcloth, and rolling in aſhes. And their repentance does not wholly conſiſt in theſe ceremonies: the royal proclamation further requires them to *cry mightily unto God; and turn every one from his evil way.* They are ſenſible of the propriety and neceſſity of prayer, earneſt prayer to God, and a reformation of life, as well as of afflicting themſelves with faſting. The light of nature directed them to this as the only method of deliverance, if deliverance was poſſible. The caſe of ſuch a people looks hopeful:—That ſo many thouſands ſhould be brought to repentance by one warning, the firſt and only warning they had ever received from a prophet of the true God; a prophet that was a contemptible ſtranger from the deſpiſed nation of the Jews; this certainly appears promiſing.

Alas! brethren, our countrymen are not ſo eaſily brought to repentance: No, this is not an eaſy thing among us. Ten thouſand warnings, not only from conſcience, from divine providence, from this very Jonah, and the other prophets of the Old Teſtament, but alſo from the goſpel, that clear and perfect revelation; I ſay, ten thouſand warnings, thus peculiarly enforced, have not ſo much effect upon our country, this Chriſtian, this Proteſtant country, as one ſhort warning from the mouth of Jonah had upon a city of heathens and idolaters. All along as I have been conſidering

conſidering this caſe, I could not caſt out of my mind that dreadful declaration of Chriſt, *The men of Nineveh ſhall riſe up in judgment with this generation, and ſhall condemn it; becauſe they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and behold, a greater than Jonas is here.* Matt. xii. 41. Nineveh never had ſuch loud calls to repentance, and ſuch a rich plenty of all the means of grace, as Virginia. The meaneſt in the kingdom of heaven, *i. e.* the meaneſt Chriſtian under the full revelation of the goſpel, is greater in ſpiritual knowledge, not only than Jonah, but than John the Baptiſt, the greateſt prophet that was ever born of a woman. And therefore, I may accommodate theſe words to us, *Behold, a greater than Jonas is here.* Here are clearer diſcoveries of the will of God, and ſtronger motives and encouragements to repentance, than ever Jonah could afford the men of Nineveh. But alas! where is our repentance! Where are our humiliation and reformation! Shall the light of nature, and one warning from a prophet, bring heathens to the knee before God; and ſhall not the goſpel, and all its loud calls, have that effect upon a Chriſtian land! Shall Nineveh repent in ſackcloth and aſhes; and ſhall Virginia ſin on ſtill, impenitent, thoughtleſs, luxurious and gay! Alas! what will be the end of this?

The caſe of the Ninevites, who were brought to repentance ſo readily, and ſo generally, looks hopeful, and ſeems to promiſe them an exemption from the threatened vengeance. And yet, ſo ſenſible was the king of Nineveh of their demerit, and the inſufficiency of their repentance to make atonement for their ſins, that he is doubtful, after all, what would be the conſequence. *Who can tell,* ſays he; who knoweth, *if God will turn and repent, and turn away from the fierceneſs of his anger, that we periſh not! q. d.* Let us humble ourſelves ever ſo low, we are not aſſured we ſhall eſcape: vengeance may, after all, ſeize us; and we may be made monuments to all the world of the juſtice of the King of kings, and the dreadful conſequences

quences of national impiety and vice. His uncertainty in this matter might proceed from the juſt ſenſe he had of the intolerable height to which the national wickedneſs had arrived, and of the ſtrictneſs of the divine juſtice. He knew that, even in his own government, it would have very bad conſequences, if all crimes ſhould be forgiven, or paſs unpuniſhed, upon the repentance of the offender: and he forms the ſame judgment concerning the divine government. Indeed, it is natural to a penitent, while he has a full view of his ſins, in all their aggravations, and of the juſtice of God, to queſtion whether ſuch ſins can be forgiven by ſo holy a God. He is apt even to fall into an extreme in this reſpect. It does not now appear ſo eaſy a thing to him to obtain a pardon, as it once did, when he had no juſt views of his guilt.—Now it appears a great thing indeed; ſo great, that he can hardly think it poſſible. Or the uncertainty of the king of Nineveh in this point might proceed from Jonah's being ſo reſerved upon it. He might have had no commiſſion from God to promiſe them deliverance upon their repentance; but he was to warn them, and then leave them in the hands of a gracious and righteous God, to deal with them according to his pleaſure. This tended to make them more ſenſible that they lay at mercy, and that he might juſtly do what he pleaſed with them. The event indeed ſhewed there was a condition implied in the threatening; and that God did ſecretly intend to ſpare them, upon their repentance. But this was wiſely concealed, and it was ſufficient that the event ſhould make it known. It is certain that national as well as perſonal repentance, may ſometimes come too late; and that ſometimes the puniſhment may fall by way of chaſtiſement, even when the repentance is ſincere, and the ſin is forgiven, ſo that it ſhall not bring on the deſtruction of the ſinner in the eternal world. But we may well ſuppoſe, an heathen monarch, who probably had no inſtruction but from Jonah's ſhort

warning, would be much at a loſs about theſe things. From this uncertainty of his about the fate of his empire, we may infer this truth, which I intend to illuſtrate with regard to ourſelves, viz.

That ſometimes a nation may be in ſuch a ſituation, that no man can tell what will be the iſſue; or whether it ſhall be delivered from the threatened vengeance, or deſtroyed.

But though the king of Nineveh was uncertain about this; yet, there was one thing that he was very certain of, viz. That if there was any poſſibility of eſcape, it was to be hoped for only in the way of earneſt prayer to God, general humiliation and reformation. This is evident from the connection of the context. *Let man and beaſt*, ſays he, *be covered with ſackcloth, and cry mightily to God, yea, let them turn every one from his evil way:—Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we periſh not! i. e.* Who can tell but he may turn away from his fierce anger, in caſe we turn from our evil ways, and humble ourſelves before him? If we do not reform, and humble ourſelves, the caſe is dreadfully plain; any one can tell that we cannot eſcape; there is not ſo much as a peradventure for it; unavoidable deſtruction will be our doom, beyond all queſtion. But if we repent, who knows what that may do? *Who knows but God may repent, and turn from the fierceneſs of his wrath!* If there be any hope at all, it is in this way. This he learned from the light of nature, if not from Jonah's preaching. And this ſuggeſts another ſeaſonable truth, which, if my time will allow, I ſhall alſo illuſtrate, viz.

That when a nation is in ſuch a ſtate, that no man can certainly determine what will be its doom, if there be any poſſible hope, it is only in the way of general humiliation, earneſt prayer and public reformation.

To prevent miſtakes, I have one thing more to obſerve upon the text; and that is, that when God is ſaid to repent, it only ſignifies, that the viſible conduct

of

of divine Providence has ſome reſemblance to the conduct of men, when they repent; and not that he is capable of repentance in a proper ſenſe, or of that changeableneſs, imperfect knowledge, ſorrow and ſelf-accuſation, which repentance among men implies.—When men repent that they have made a thing, they deſtroy it; and therefore, when God deſtroyed man by a deluge, he is ſaid to repent that he made him; and when he depoſed Saul, it is ſaid, he repented that he had made him king. When men do not execute their threatenings, it is ſuppoſed they repent of them; and hence, when God does not inflict the threatened evil, he is ſaid to repent of the evil; *i. e.* he acts as men do when they repent of their purpoſe; though when he made the denunciation, he well knew the event, and determined not to execute it, upon the repentance of the offenders. So with regard to Nineveh, there was no proper repentance in God, but an uniform, conſiſtent purpoſe. He purpoſed to denounce his vengeance againſt that city; and he did ſo: he purpoſed and foreſaw their repentance; and it accordingly came to paſs: he purpoſed to ſpare them upon their repentance; and he did ſo. All this is very conſiſtent, and implies no proper repentance in God: for in this ſenſe, *God is not a man, that he ſhould repent*, Numb. xxiii. 19. but *he is of one mind, and who can turn him? and what his ſoul deſireth, even that he doth.* Job xxiii. 13.

I now enter upon the illuſtration of the firſt inference upon the text, viz.

I. That ſometimes a nation may be in ſuch a ſituation, that no man can tell what will be their doom; whether the threatened vengeance will fall upon them, or whether they ſhall eſcape.

This, we have ſeen, was the ſituation of Nineveh, though now lying in deep repentance, and not in danger, as far as appears from any viſible cauſe. Thouſands were now mourning, praying, and reforming; and we have no account of an enemy preparing to invade

invade them. And if Nineveh, in this ſituation, which ſeems ſo promiſing, was, notwithſtanding, in ſuch danger that no man could determine what would be their doom, alas! what ſhall we ſay of Virginia, and the kingdoms to which we belong, when they are neither penitent before God, nor ſafe from the arms of a powerful and victorious enemy? If the repentance of the Ninevites gave them no aſſurance of eſcape, but only a peradventure, *Who can tell if God will turn from his fierce anger?* Certainly our doom muſt, at beſt, be equally uncertain, when, inſtead of repentance, reformation and mighty crying to God, we ſee the generality impenitent, unreformed and prayerleſs ſtill? I would not damp you with unmanly fears; but I cannot help ſaying, that our doom is diſmally uncertain. I know not what a provoked God intends to do with us and our nation. I have my hopes indeed; but they are balanced, and ſometimes overbalanced, with fearful and gloomy apprehenſions. But,

1. The iſſue of the preſent war will appear dreadfully uncertain, if we conſider the preſent poſture of affairs.

We are engaged in war with a powerful, exaſperated enemy; and blood is ſtreaming by ſea and land. Some deciſive blow will probably be ſtruck ere long: but on what party it will fall, and what will be the iſſue of this ſtruggle and commotion among the nations, is an anxious uncertainty. It ſeems but too likely, though it ſtrikes me with horror to admit the thought, that a provoked God intends to ſcourge us with the rod of France, and therefore gives ſurpriſing ſucceſs to her arms. Who can tell, but the king of France may have the ſame commiſſion given him by that God, whom we and our mother-country have ſo grievouſly offended, as was given to the Aſſyrian monarch, in Iſaiah's time, when God ſpeaks of him as his rod, to chaſtiſe his own people, and as acting by a commiſſion from him, though he neither knew nor

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deſigned it, but only intended to gratify his own ambition? *O Aſſyrian, the rod of mine anger, and the ſtaff in their hand is mine indignation. I will ſend him againſt an hypocritical nation; and againſt the people of my wrath will I give him a charge to take the ſpoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the ſtreets. Howbeit, he meaneth not ſo; neither doth his heart think ſo: but it is in his heart to deſtroy, and cut off nations not a few.* But at the ſame time it is foretold, That *when the Lord hath performed his whole work upon mount Zion, and on Jeruſalem, I will puniſh the fruit of the ſtout heart of the king of Aſſyria, and the glory of his high looks.* Iſa. x. 5, 6, 7, 12. And if the ſame commiſſion be given to the king of France, I doubt not but his end will be the ſame. When God has finiſhed his work of correction with this rod, he will break it, or burn it in the fire. The like commiſſion was given to Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon; and when he, and his ſon, and his ſon's ſon, had ſerved as the executioners of God's wrath upon his people, and the neighbouring nations, they and the Babylonian empire were deſtroyed together. *Thus ſaith the Lord of hoſts, becauſe ye have not heard my words, behold, I will ſend and take all the families of the north, ſaith the Lord, and Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, my ſervant (my ſervant,* to execute this my work of correction, and of vengeance) *and I will bring them againſt this land, and againſt the inhabitants thereof, and againſt all theſe nations round about, and I will utterly deſtroy them, and make them an aſtoniſhment, and an hiſſing, and perpetual deſolations—But it ſhall come to paſs, when ſeventy years are accompliſhed* (the ſpace of time allotted for his power, and the correction of God's people) *that then will I puniſh the king of Babylon, and that nation, ſaith the Lord, for their iniquity, and the land of the Chaldeans, and will make it perpetual deſolations.* (Jer. xxv. 8—12—14.) Thus you ſee it is no uncommon thing for God, when tranſgreſſions are come to the full, to raiſe up ſome power to perform his work of chaſtiſement

ment and vengeance, and render it victorious and irreſiſtible, till that work is done, and then to cruſh it in its turn. And whether divine Providence is now about to employ the power of France for this purpoſe, is a dreadful uncertainty. We hope, indeed, matters will take a more favourable turn; but the preſent poſture of affairs, and particularly the rapid conqueſts of that power, which is now become ſo formidable even in America, give us reaſon to fear this may be the event, and that matters are now ripening faſt for this terrible reſult.

I may add, that we have reaſon to fear from the diſpoſition and conduct of many among ourſelves, ſome in high places have been ſuſpected of treachery or cowardice, or at leaſt bad conduct. A ſpirit of ſecurity, ſloth and cowardice, evidently prevails; nothing great is ſo much as attempted, much leſs executed. We have alſo ſo many black foreigners among ourſelves, as may juſtly alarm our fears. Now if the French ſhould invade our frontiers; if the Indians, that are now neuter, or in the Britiſh intereſt, ſhould join with them, and with thoſe tribes that are already ſo active upon their ſide; and if their united forces ſhould pour down upon us, and meet with a welcome reception and aſſiſtance from ſo powerful an enemy among ourſelves; I ſay, ſhould this be the caſe, I need not tell you what unexampled ſcenes of blood, cruelty and devaſtation would open in our country. This may not be the event; and I hope and pray it may not: but it is not ſo improbable as we could wiſh; much leſs is it impoſſible. Who knows but this may actually be the conſequence!

And if the natural allies of France ſhould form a confederacy againſt our mother-country, and attack her with their united ſtrength, how terrible would the conſequences probably be, both to her and to us, eſpecially if the Proteſtant powers ſhould not vigorouſly concur with us againſt them! This event may not

not happen; and I hope and pray it may not: but it is not ſo unlikely as one could wiſh. But,

2. The event of the preſent war will appear diſmally doubtful, if we conſider ſome Scripture prophecies, particularly in Daniel and the Revelations.

I cannot pretend to enter deeply into this ſubject at preſent; a ſubject that has filled ſo many volumes, and employed the thoughts and pens of ſo many great men. It will be ſufficient to my preſent purpoſe to obſerve,

(1.) That the idolatrous perſecuting power of Popery, ſeated at Rome, is undoubtedly meant by the little horn in Daniel (Dan. vii. 8.) that roſe up out of the Roman empire, when it was divided into ten kingdoms by the barbarous nations that broke in upon it: an horn *which had a mouth, ſpeaking great things; which made war with the ſaints, and prevailed againſt them;* an horn *which ſpeaks great things againſt the Moſt High, and wears out the ſaints of the Moſt High; and thinks to change times and laws, i. e.* to alter and corrupt the ordinances of God. ver. 24, 25. The ſame idolatrous, perſecuting power is alſo intended in the Revelations, (Rev. xiii.) by *the beaſt with ſeven heads and ten horns, that had a mouth given him, ſpeaking great things, and blaſphemies: and he opened his mouth in blaſphemy againſt God,* &c. *and it was given unto him to make war with the ſaints, and to overcome them; and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations; and all that dwell on the earth ſhall worſhip him, whoſe names are not written in the Lamb's book of life.* The ſame indolatrous and perſecuting power is intended likewiſe by the woman (Rev. xvii.) *ſitting upon a ſcarlet-coloured beaſt, having ſeven heads, and ten horns; full of names of blaſphemy, and drunk with the blood of the ſaints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jeſus.* Proteſtant commentators generally agree in this application of theſe prophecies to the Papal power; but I cannot take time to lay before you the full evidence upon which they proceed. However,

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I cannot but juſt obſerve, that the angel-interpreter expreſsly tells St. John, that this woman was that great city which then reigned over the kings of the earth (ver. xviii.) which undoubtedly means the city of Rome, that was then the ſeat of univerſal empire. But,

(2.) The time of the reign of this idolatrous and perſecuting power is determined in prophetic numbers, both in Daniel and the Revelations. In Daniel, it is ſaid, the ſaints ſhall be given into the hand of the horns until a time, times, and the dividing of time, Dan. vii. 25. and that he ſhall ſcatter the power of the holy people for a time, times, and half a time. Dan. xii. 7. In the Revelations, we are told that the church of Chriſt, repreſented by a woman, ſhall continue in the wilderneſs, *i. e.* in a ſtate of oppreſſion and perſecution, under the Popiſh power, for a time, times, and half a time, Rev. xii. 14. *that the outer court of the temple, and the holy* city, another emblem of the true church of Chriſt, *ſhall be given to the Gentiles, i. e.* ſubjected to a power no better than heathen, *and by them trodden under foot forty-two months;* that the church ſhould be fed in the wilderneſs for *twelve hundred and ſixty days*, Rev. xii. 6. and *that the two witneſſes, i. e.* the ſmall remnant of the faithful who ſhall retain the purity of the goſpel, and witneſs againſt the corruptions of the church of Rome, *ſhall propheſy twelve hundred and ſixty days in ſackcloth.* Theſe are but different repreſentations of the ſame period: and in order to underſtand them you are to obſerve, that, in this calculation, a day ſignifies a year; and therefore twelve hundred and ſixty days are twelve hundred and ſixty years. A month conſiſts of thirty ſuch days, *i. e.* thirty years; for the months among the ancients were invariably made up of but thirty days, as their year conſiſted only of three hundred and ſixty days. Now forty-two months, multiplied by thirty, juſt make twelve hundred and ſixty years. So time ſignifies one year, times two years, and half a time,

a time, or the dividing of time, half a year: now one year and two years making three years, and the half year added to them make three years and a half. Theſe three years and a half contain thrice three hundred and ſixty years, and the half of three hundred and ſixty (viz. one hundred and eighty) which make exactly twelve hundred and ſixty years. So that all theſe calculations amount to the ſame thing, viz. twelve hundred and ſixty years. This is undoubtedly the duration of the Popiſh tyranny, and of the oppreſſion of the ſaints, and the cauſe of truth. Now if we could find out when it begun, whether when the Pope uſurped and exerciſed the ſubſtance of eccleſiaſtical authority as univerſal biſhop, which was in the fifth century; or when he was formerly inveſted with that authority by the emperor Phocas, A. D. 606; or when he was made a ſecular prince, and had a civil authority added to his eccleſiaſtical, by Pipin, king of France, A. D. 756; I ſay, if we could find out when this ſpace of twelve hundred and ſixty years began, we could eaſily find out when it will end: and this would help us to determine what will be the event of the preſent war, whether the oppreſſion of the Proteſtant cauſe, or the downfal of the bloody power of Popery, that has undoubtedly held the world in ignorance, idolatry and ſlavery, for above a thouſand years. But after all the ſearches I can make, I am not able to form a certain determination upon the point; and commentators differ ſo widely among themſelves, that I have received but little light from them. I muſt therefore leave you in that uncertainty, in which I am myſelf; and conſequently deſtitute of light from theſe predictions concerning the event of the preſent war. But,

(3.) Though this period of twelve hundred and ſixty years is to be, all through, a ſeries of tyranny and perſecution; and the cauſe of truth and its advocates are continually under oppreſſion; yet there is a ſhort ſpace in this period, I ſuppoſe, from the

calculation in the Revelation, Rev. xi. 9. about three years and a half, in which the cauſe of truth ſhall ſeem entirely ſuppreſſed, and its friends utterly extinct; ſo that there will be no human probability of their revival, any more than of a human body that has lain dead three days and a half. And upon this the Popiſh powers ſhall exult and triumph, as if they had obtained an entire and laſting victory. This is probably the time referred to in Daniel (chap. xii. 1.) as *a time of trouble, ſuch as never was ſince there was a nation, even to that time.* During the reſt of the twelve hundred and ſixty days, the witneſſes propheſied in ſackcloth, in a ſtate of mourning and perſecution: but in this period they are killed; and their dead bodies lie, unburied and inſulted, in the ſtreet of the great city, *i. e.* in the Roman territories: *and they that dwell upon the earth ſhall rejoice over them, and make merry, and ſend gifts one to another.* Rev. xi. 7—10. This is a melancholy time indeed for the few ſervants of Jeſus Chriſt. And who can tell, whether it be paſt, or whether it be future, and the iſſue of the preſent war? I could eaſily lay before you the opinions of good and great men on this point; but they are ſo various, that they could not bring you to any certain concluſion upon it. Some ſuppoſe it paſt; and that it was either a little before the Reformation, when the Albigenſes and Waldenſes, who had been witneſſes for a long time againſt the corruptions of popery, were, in appearance, utterly extirpated by a ſeries of bloody perſecutions, at the Pope's inſtigation: and if this was the period, then the reſurrection of the witneſſes, and their being caught up into heaven, muſt ſignify the revival of their cauſe at the Reformation, and the raiſing up of Luther, Calvin, and other reformers, in the ſame ſpirit. Or, as others ſuppoſe, this melancholy time was about the year 1550, when the perſecution raged in England under Queen Mary, and the civil wars in France, Germany, and the Low Countries, on account of religion, ſeemed

ed to threaten the utter extinction of the Proteſtant cauſe. Thoſe that ſuppoſe this time is paſt, have ſundry arguments, that are at leaſt plauſible, to ſupport their opinion; and if I have any opinion at all, in ſo doubtful a matter, I incline to this.

There are others, of no ſmall judgment in ſuch matters, that apprehend this melancholy period is yet to come; and they too have their reaſons, which I cannot now mention. And if this be the caſe, who can tell but the melancholy time is now at hand, and that the preſent commotions in Europe are working up to it? This is certain, it will be introduced by war: for we are expreſsly told, that *when the two witneſſes have finiſhed their teſtimony, the beaſt ſhall make war againſt them, and ſhall overcome them and kill them*, Rev. xi. 7. and that juſt before the pouring out of the ſeventh vial, which ſhall utterly deſtroy the popiſh powers, and introduce the kingdom of Chriſt, the kings of the earth, by popiſh inſtigation, ſhall gather themſelves together to the battle of the great day of God Almighty, in a place called Armageddon (Rev. xvi. 13, 14, 16.) or Megiddo, where good Joſiah, the great reformer of the Jewiſh religion, was ſlain. *I ſaw the beaſt*, ſays St. John, *and the kings of the earth and their armies, gathered together to make war againſt him that ſat on the horſe, i. e.* againſt Jeſus Chriſt and his army. Rev. xix. 19. Popery will die hard, and its laſt ſtruggles be very violent. It will collect all its forces, and make a bold puſh to recover its loſt authority: and this will undoubtedly be attended with much ſlaughter. But whether it will be victorious in the firſt attack, and at this time ſlay the witneſſes; or whether the Lamb and his army ſhall immediately prevail, as he certainly will at laſt; * this ſeems uncertain. Now who can tell, but the preſent war is the commencement of this grand deciſive conflict.

* See the final iſſue of this grand deciſive conflict, deſcribed in moſt lively terms, Rev. xix. from ver. 11. *ad fin.*

flict between the Lamb and the beaſt, *i. e.* between the proteſtant and popiſh powers? The pope firſt received his principality and ſecular authority from Pipin, one of the kings of France: and there ſeems to be ſomething congruous in it, that France ſhould alſo take the lead, and be, as it were, the general of his forces in this laſt deciſive conflict for the ſupport of that authority. This is alſo remarkable, and almoſt peculiar to the preſent war, viz. That proteſtants and papiſts are not blended together in it by promiſcuous alliances: but France and her allies are all papiſts; and Britain and her allies are all proteſtants; and conſequently whatever party fall, the religion of that party is like to fall too. If France and her allies ſhould prove victorious, then we may conclude the period for ſlaying the witneſſes is juſt coming. But if Britain and her allies ſhould be victorious, then we may conclude that time is paſt, and that the time is juſt come when it ſhall be proclaimed, *Babylon is fallen! is fallen!* but all this is uncertain, at leaſt to me, till the event make it plain; and for that we muſt wait with anxious ſuſpenſe.

But here I cannot help mentioning one thing, to mitigate your anxieties; and that is, that however bloody and deſolating this laſt conflict may be, it will bring about the moſt glorious and happy revolution that ever was in the world. It will quite change the face of things, introduce *a new heaven and a new earth, wherein righteouſneſs ſhall dwell;* and it will new-model the kingdoms of the world, *and they ſhall become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Chriſt; and he ſhall reign for ever*, Rev. xi. 15. then Satan ſhall be bound, and Chriſt ſhall reign in the hearts of men, a thouſand years. How remarkable upon this head are the prophecies of Daniel, above two thouſand years ago! *I beheld*, ſays he, *and the little horn made war with the ſaints, and prevailed againſt them until the Ancient of Days came; i. e.* came to give dominion, and glory, and a kingdom to the Son of man, Dan. vii. 21, 22.

and

and then judgment was given to the ſaints of the Moſt High; and the time came that the ſaints poſſeſſed the kingdom. ver. 13, 14.—They ſhall be uppermoſt in their turn, and be finally triumphant. All the other empires and kingdoms of the world have been ſubject to revolutions, paſſed from hand to hand, and at length fallen to pieces; but this, ſays Daniel, is *a kingdom which ſhall never be deſtroyed; a kingdom that ſhall not be left to other people; but it ſhall break to pieces and conſume all the kingdoms that were before it, and it ſhall ſtand for ever.* Dan. ii. 44.—Hail, happy period! how long wilt thou delay? Lord Jeſus, let thy kingdom come! let it come, though to make way for it, many thrones muſt totter that are now the ſupporters of Antichriſt: let it come, though many kingdoms ſhould be overturned, and many countries ſtream with blood; though we and millions more ſhould be cruſhed in the grand revolution. See, brethren, the happy reſult of all the commotions that are, or have been, on this reſtleſs globe: ſee to what a glorious end they all tend! And who would not willingly live a while longer in this world of ſin and ſorrow, and ſhare in calamities of war, and all the plagues reſerved for the latter times, if he may but ſee this bleſſed period! But if we ſhould not be ſo happy as to ſee it with mortal eyes, ſuch of us as *die in the Lord* ſhall receive the welcome intelligence of it in heaven, and rejoice in it as much as its proper ſubjects on earth.—You will forgive me, if I have dwelt too long upon this new and curious ſubject. I ſhall now proceed with more haſte. Therefore,

3. The event of the preſent war, and the doom of our country and nation, will appear dreadfully uncertain if we conſider our national guilt and impenitence.

Let Atheiſts and Epicureans ſay what they pleaſe, it is an eternal truth, which all the world will be made to know at laſt, that Jehovah is the ruler of the univerſe; that the fate of kingdoms is in his hands; that

that he is the Sovereign Arbiter of war, and determines victory as he pleaſes. It is alſo certain that rewards and puniſhments are as eſſential to his government as they are to all other governments. In the world to come he will reward or puniſh individuals, according to their perſonal works; and in the preſent world he will reward or puniſh nations, according to their national work;—in the preſent world, I ſay, becauſe it is only in the preſent world they ſubſiſt in a national capacity, and are capable of national rewards and puniſhments. Now there is a time, *when the tranſgreſſors are come to the full*, Dan. viii. 23. when the meaſure of a people's iniquity is filled up, and they are ripe for vengeance. And then the executioners of divine vengeance, the ſword, famine, peſtilential diſeaſes, earthquakes, and the like, are turned looſe among them, then the dread commiſſion is iſſued out, *Put ye in the ſickle, for the harveſt is ripe; come, get ye down; for the preſs is full; the vats overflow; for their wickedneſs is great.* Joel iii. 13. Then all the undertakings of ſuch a people are blaſted; and even the worſt of the heathen (Ezek. vii. 24.) ſucceed againſt them. That nation is thrown off from the hinge on which empire turns, and therefore muſt fall. The Lord of armies is againſt them; and by a ſecret, but irreſiſtible hand, brings on their deſtruction.

Now whether that fatal period be arrived, with reſpect to us and our nation, I will not determine; nor indeed am I capable: but I am ſure it is not evident that it is not come: I am ſure our land is full of ſin againſt the Holy One of Iſrael. On this ſubject I have often enlarged; and now, I am afraid, it is a trite diſregarded tale. The ſins of our land lie heavy upon it: the ſins of all ranks and denominations; the ſins of paſt and preſent generations; ſins againſt the law and againſt the goſpel; ſins againſt mercies and againſt judgments; ſins in heart, in language, in practice; ſins of all kinds and degrees, and againſt all

all ſorts of obligations: Oh! what a huge heap, what an intolerable burden, do all theſe ſins make! The ſins of many millions on both ſides the Atlantic! Our body politic is a huge maſs of corruption! *the whole head is ſick; and the whole heart faint: from the ſole of the foot unto the head there is no ſoundneſs in it, but all full of wounds, and bruiſes, and putrifying ſores.* Iſa. i. 6. And does not this leave our doom in a dreadful ſuſpenſe? Who can tell what will be the fate of ſo guilty a people? Can we indulge high hopes with ſuch a load of guilt upon us? Sin lies like a dead weight upon our counſels, our deſigns and expeditions; and cruſhes all of them. What though our enemies be as wicked as ourſelves, with only this exception, that they have not our advantages, and therefore cannot ſin with our aggravations? But what if they were in all reſpects as bad? It has been no unuſual thing for God to employ one guilty nation to execute his vengeance upon another; and when that drudgery is done (which, by the by, is more properly devolved upon a hated nation than upon his people; he has more beneficent and agreeable work for them) I ſay, when that drudgery is done, he executes the executioner: juſt as one among a number of criminals may be appointed to execute the reſt; and then he is executed himſelf by ſome other hand. Thus God employed the Aſſyrians and Babylonians to puniſh his people, the Jews; and when they had, though undeſignedly, done him that ſervice, he puniſhes them in a yet ſeverer manner. And thus he threatens the Jews by Ezekiel, that he would bring the worſt of the Heathen againſt them: they were good enough to be executioners. So he employs devils, the worſt of beings, to execute his vengeance upon ſinners in hell. And ſo in human governments, the refuſe of mankind are appointed hangmen.

But though our land be ſo full of ſin, yet there would be ſome ground to hope, could we ſee any appearances of a general repentance and reformation. But,

But, alas! where ſhall we find it? I have not been altogether a heedleſs obſerver of the effects of the corrective and vindictive providences of God towards our land, the ſword, a threatened famine, and a deadly, raging diſtemper.* But I have been really ſhocked to obſerve the iſſue. I am afraid, that even the people of God are not ſo effectually rouzed by theſe warnings as they ſhould be. One would think they would be all life and vigour at ſuch a time as this: but, alas! I am afraid it is otherwiſe. I am eſpecially afraid that impenitent ſinners, inſtead of being melted into repentance, are hardening more and more like clay in the ſun. Alas! I ſee and hear no more of ſerious concern about eternal things among us, than if we lived in a healthy neighbourhood, and a peaceful, unmoleſted country. I am afraid the caſe of ſome bears a diſmal reſemblance to that deſcribed in Rev. xv. 10, 11. *They gnawed their tongues for pain, and blaſphemed the God of Heaven, becauſe of their pains and their ſores, and repented not of their deeds;* no, they are ſullenly obſtinate to wickedneſs ſtill.

Brethren, what are we doing? Are we aſleep at ſuch a time as this, when the judgments of Heaven are around us, and the fate of our country is ſo terribly doubtful? For God's ſake, for our ſoul's ſake, for our country's ſake, let us rouze ourſelves from our ſecurity; let us humble ourſelves before God, *and cry mightily to him; and who can tell but he may turn away from his fierce anger?*—Which leads me to the ſecond inference from my text, viz.

II. That when a nation is in ſuch a doubtful ſituation that no man can know its doom, if there be any hope, it is only in the way of repentance, reformation, and earneſt prayer.

This appears the only way of hope on two accounts.

1. National

* At this time a flux raged in the congregation, and elſewhere, which baffled all the power of medicine, and ſwept off ſome whole families almoſt entirely.

1. National ſin has a direct tendency, in its own nature, to weaken and deſtroy a nation. It is the deadly diſeaſe of a body politic which will deſtroy it, without the hand of an executioner. It ſpreads corruption, injuſtice, treachery, diſcord, confuſion, cowardice, through a nation; and it deſtroys public ſpirit, the love of our country, unanimity, courage, and all the ſocial and heroic virtues which naturally tend to ſtrengthen, defend and advance a people. Now repentance, reformation and prayer, is the proper cure for this diſeaſe; it purges out theſe internal principles of death, and implants and cheriſhes the oppoſite principles of virtue and life. But this is not all; for,

2. Repentance, reformation and prayer, is the only method to *turn away the diſpleaſure of God*, and obtain his favour and protection. Sin brings on a people the curſe of a provoked God; and under this they fade and wither away, like a blaſted flower, or a tree ſtruck by lightning from heaven. But if it be poſſible to remove it, and obtain the divine favour, it is only by deep humiliation before him, by a thorough reformation from thoſe ſins that provoke him, and by earneſt cries for mercy. The light of nature taught the men of Nineveh that this was the only way of hope: and revelation aſſures us of the very ſame thing. It is only to the penitent that the promiſes of deliverance are made; and without repentance, we have no poſſible claim to them. Deliverances are generally anſwers to prayer; and therefore without earneſt prayer we cannot expect them. National judgments are inflicted for national ſins; and therefore reformation from national ſins is the only hopeful way to eſcape them.

Therefore, my brethren, let us betake ourſelves to this only method of hope. Let us deeply humble ourſelves before God; *let us cry mightily to him—and let us turn every one from our evil ways:* and then, *who*

can tell but God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we periſh not?

But in all my exhortations of this kind, I muſt remember that repentance and reformation is the duty of fallen creatures; of creatures ſo depraved and feeble, that they are not able, of themſelves, ſo much as to apply the remedy. If you attempt this work with the pride of imaginary ſelf-ſufficiency, you may be ſure diſappointment will be the conſequence. Therefore remember, that it is the holy Spirit of God alone that is the author of a thorough repentance and effectual reformation. It is he alone that can effectually convince the world of ſin. If he be abſent, legiſlators may make laws againſt vice, philoſophers may reaſon, miniſters may preach, nay, conſcience may remonſtrate, the divine law may preſcribe and threaten, the goſpel may invite and allure; but all will be in vain: all will not produce one true penitent. The ſtrongeſt arguments, the moſt melting intreaties, the moſt alarming denunciations, from God and man, enforced by the higheſt authority, or by the moſt compaſſionate tears, all will have no effect; all will not effectually reclaim one ſinner, nor gain one ſincere proſelyte to righteouſneſs: Paul, Apollos, and Cephas, with all their apoſtolical abilities, can do nothing to the purpoſe without the holy Spirit. *Paul may plant, and Apollos water; but God alone can give the increaſe. So then, neither is he that planteth any thing, nor he that watereth;* they are both nothing together: but God, who giveth the increaſe (1 Cor. iii. 7.) is all in all. *Till the Spirit be poured forth from on high,* ſays Iſaiah, *briars and thorns ſhall come up upon the land of my people; i. e.* Their country ſhall be laid waſte, and be made a mere wilderneſs of briars and thorns, by the ravages of war: or the people themſelves ſhall be like briars and thorns, fruitleſs, noxious and troubleſome. In this language the prophet Micah deſcribes the ſame people: the beſt of them is as a briar; the moſt upright is ſharper than a thorn-hedge. (Micah vii. 4.) Such

ſhall

ſhall they continue, until the holy Spirit be poured forth upon them from on high. But when the happy time comes, *then the wilderneſs ſhall be a fruitful field; then judgment ſhall dwell in the wilderneſs, and righteouſneſs ſhall remain in the fruitful field.* This effuſion of the Spirit ſhall put an end to the deſolation of war, and eſtabliſh them in the poſſeſſion of laſting and extenſive peace: for, as it is there added, the work of righteouſneſs ſhall be peace, and the native effect of righteouſneſs ſhall be quietneſs and aſſurance for ever: and my people ſhall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in ſure dwellings, and in quiet reſting-places. (Iſa. xxxii. 13, 18.) You ſee, my brethren, of how much importance and neceſſity the Spirit is to produce a reformation, and that bleſſed peace and ſecurity, both perſonal and national, both within and without, which is the effect of it!

And how are we to expect his ſacred influences? Or in what way may we hope to attain them? The anſwer is, Pray for them: pray frequently, pray fervently, "Lord, thy ſpirit! O give thy ſpirit! that is the bleſſing I want; the bleſſing which families, and nations, and the whole human race want." Pray in your retirements; pray in your families; pray in ſocieties appointed for that purpoſe; pray in warm ejaculations, pray without ceaſing, for this grand, fundamental bleſſing. Here what encouragement Chriſt has given to prayer in this particular: *Aſk, and it ſhall be given you; ſeek, and ye ſhall find; knock, and it ſhall be opened unto you.—If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more ſhall your heavenly Father give his holy Spirit to them that aſk him!* Luke xi. 9—13. Endeavour to repent in this humble, ſelf-diffident manner, and you may hope it will at leaſt avail to your eternal ſalvation; and who knows but it may avail alſo to turn away the fierce anger of God from your country and nation?

SERMON

SERMON LXIII.

THE CURSE OF COWARDICE.*

JER. xlviii. 10. *Curſed be he that doth the work of the Lord deceitfully; and curſed be he that keepeth back his ſword from blood.*

NOTHING can be more agreeable to the God of Peace, than to ſee univerſal harmony and benevolence prevail among his creatures: and he has laid them under the ſtrongeſt obligations to cultivate a pacific temper towards one another, both as individuals and as nations. *Follow peace with all men*, is one of the principal precepts of our holy religion. And the great Prince of Peace has ſolemnly pronounced, *Bleſſed are the peace-makers.*

But when, in this corrupt, diſordered ſtate of things, where the luſts of men are perpetually embroiling the world with wars and fightings, and throwing all into confuſion; when ambition and avarice would rob us of our property, for which we have toiled, and on which we ſubſiſt; when they would enſlave the free-born mind, and compel us meanly to cringe to uſurpation and arbitrary power; when they would tear from our eager graſp the moſt valuable bleſſing of heaven, I mean our religion; when they invade our country, formerly the region of tranquillity, ravage our frontiers, butcher our fellow-ſubjects, or confine them in a barbarous captivity in the dens of ſavages; when our earthly all is ready to be ſeized by rapacious hands, and even our eternal all

* Preached to the militia of Hanover County, in Virginia, at a general muſter, May 8, 1758, with a view to raiſe a company for Captain Samuel Meredith.

all is in danger by the loſs of our religion: when this is the caſe, what is then the will of God? Muſt peace then be maintained, maintained with our perfidious and cruel invaders? maintained at the expence of property, liberty, life, and every thing dear and valuable? maintained, when it is in our power to vindicate our right, and do ourſelves juſtice? Is the work of peace then our only buſineſs? No; in ſuch a time even the God of Peace proclaims by his providence, "To arms!" Then the ſword is, as it were, conſecrated to God; and the art of war becomes a part of our religion. Then happy is he that ſhall reward our enemies as they have ſerved us. Pſalm cxxxvii. 8. Bleſſed is the brave ſoldier: bleſſed is the defender of his country, and the deſtroyer of its enemies. Bleſſed are they who offer themſelves willingly in this ſervice, and who faithfully diſcharge it. But, on the other hand, *Curſed is he that doth the work of the Lord deceitfully; and curſed is he that keepeth back his ſword from blood.*

As to the original reference and meaning of theſe words, it is ſufficient to my purpoſe to obſerve, that the Moabites, againſt whom this prophecy was immediately denounced, were a troubleſome and reſtleſs nation in the neighbourhood of the Jews, who, tho' often ſubdued by them, yet upon every occaſion ſtruggled to recover their power, and renewed their hoſtilities. By this, and various other ſteps, they were arrived to the higheſt pitch of national guilt, and ripe for execution. The Babylonians were commiſſioned for this work of vengeance: and they were bound to execute the commiſſion faithfully, under penalty of a curſe. To them this denunciation was immediately directed, *Curſed be he that doth the work of the Lord deceitfully*, or negligently;* *and curſed be he that keepeth back his ſword from blood.* This is expreſſed in the form of an imprecation, or an authoritative denunciation of a curſe: and in this form it might be uſed

* *amelos*, Septuag.

uſed conſiſtently with benevolence, by a prophet ſpeaking as the mouth of God. But this is not a pattern for our imitation, who are peculiarly obliged, under the goſpel to *Bleſs, and, curſe not*, and to *pray for all men*. However, it may be pronounced even by our lips as a declaration of the righteous curſe of God againſt a daſtardly refuſal to engage in war when it is our duty; or a deceitful, negligent diſcharge of that duty, after we have engaged in it. Theſe are the crimes that ſeem intended in my text: and againſt each of theſe the tremendous curſe of Jehovah is ſtill in full force in all ages, even under the mild and gentle diſpenſation of the goſpel. Cowardice and treachery are now as execrable as ever.

Curſed be he that keepeth back his ſword from blood.—This denunciation, like the artillery of heaven, is levelled againſt the coward who, when God, in the courſe of his providence, calls him to arms, refuſes to obey, and conſults his own eaſe and ſafety more than his duty to God and his country.

Curſed be he that doth the work of the Lord deceitfully.—This ſeems to be levelled againſt another ſpecies of cowards; fly, hypocritical cowards, who undertake the work of the Lord, that is, take up arms; but they do the work of the Lord deceitfully; that is, they do not faithfully uſe their arms for the purpoſes they were taken up. They commence ſoldiers, not that they may ſerve their country, and do their duty to God, but that they may live in eaſe, idleneſs, and pleaſure, and enrich themſelves at the public expence. *Curſed is he that doth the work of the Lord deceitfully*, and ſerves himſelf under pretence of ſerving his country.

You, gentlemen, and others, whom I this day, behold with peculiar pleaſure engaged in the cauſe of your neglected country, and who have done me the honour of inviting me to this ſervice; a ſervice which I am ſure I ſhould perform to your ſatisfaction, if my preparations and abilities were proportioned to my benevolence

benevolence for you, and my concern for your ſucceſs: you are peculiarly intereſted in the remarks I have made upon the text. And that I may contribute all in my power both to increaſe your number, and direct you to a proper conduct in the honourable character you ſuſtain, I ſhall lay before you a brief view of the preſent circumſtances of our country; from which it will appear, that the war in which we are engaged is a duty, or the work of the Lord; and conſequently, that we are all obliged, according to our reſpective characters, to carry it on with vigour, under penalty of falling under the curſe of God. And then I ſhall ſhew you what is the deceitful performance of the Lord's work, or unſeaſonably keeping back of the ſword from blood, which expoſes to the curſe.

I. I am to lay before you a brief view of the preſent circumſtances of our country, which render the war in which we are engaged the work of the Lord, which conſecrate ſwords as inſtruments of righteouſneſs, and call us to the dreadful, but important duty of ſhedding human blood, upon penalty of falling under the tremendous curſe of God.

Need I inform you what barbarities and depredations a mongrel race of Indian ſavages and French papiſts have perpetrated upon our frontiers? How many deſerted or demoliſhed houſes and plantations? How wide an extent of country abandoned? How many poor families obliged to fly in conſternation, and leave their all behind them? What breaches and ſeparations between the neareſt relations? What painful ruptures of heart from heart? What ſhocking diſperſions of thoſe once united by the ſtrongeſt and moſt endearing ties? Some lie dead, mangled with ſavage wounds, conſumed to aſhes with outrageous flames, or torn and devoured by the beaſts of the wilderneſs, while their bones lie whitening in the ſun, and ſerve as tragical memorials of the fatal ſpot where they fell. Others have been dragged away

way captives, and made the ſlaves of imperious and cruel ſavages: others have made their eſcape, and live to lament their butchered or captivated friends and relations. In ſhort, our frontiers have been drenched with the blood of our fellow-ſubjects, thro' the length of a thouſand miles: and new wounds are ſtill opening. We, in theſe inland parts of the country, are as yet unmoleſted, through the unmerited mercy of Heaven.—But let us only glance a thought to the weſtern extremities of our body politic; and what melancholy ſcenes open to our view! Now, perhaps, while I am ſpeaking; now, while you are ſecure and unmoleſted, our fellow-ſubjects there may be feeling the calamities I am deſcribing. Now, perhaps, the ſavage ſhouts and whoops of Indians, and the ſcreams and groans of ſome butchered family, may be mingling their horrors, and circulating their tremendous echoes through the wilderneſs of rocks and mountains! Now, perhaps, ſome tender, delicate creature may be ſuffering an involuntary proſtitution to ſavage luſt; and perhaps debauched and murdered by the ſame hand! Now, perhaps, ſome miſerable Briton or Virginian may be paſſing through a tedious proceſs of experiments in the infernal art of torture! Now ſome helpleſs children may be torn from the arms of their murdered parents, and dragged away weeping and wringing their hands, to receive their education among barbarians, and to be formed upon the model of a ferocious Indian ſoul!

And will theſe violences ceaſe without a vigorous and timely reſiſtance from us? Can Indian revenge and thirſt for blood be glutted? or can French ambition and avarice be ſatisfied? No, we have no method left, but to repel force with force, and to give them blood to drink in their turn, who have drank ours. If we ſit ſtill and do nothing, or content ourſelves, as, alas! we have hitherto, with feeble, dilatory efforts, we may expect theſe barbarities will not only continue, but that the Indians, headed by the French,

French, will carry their inroads ſtill farther into the country, and reach even unto us. By the deſertion of our remote ſettlements, the frontiers are approaching every day nearer and nearer to us: and if we cannot ſtand our ground now, when we have above an hundred miles of a thick-ſettled country between us and the enemy, much leſs ſhall we be able, when our ſtrength is weakened by ſo vaſt a loſs of men, arms and riches, and we lie expoſed to their immediate incurſions. Some cry, "Let the enemy come down to us, and then we will fight them." But this is the trifling excuſe of cowardice or ſecurity, and not the language of prudence and fortitude. Thoſe who make this plea, if the enemy ſhould take them at their word, and make them ſo near a viſit, would be as forward in flight as they are now backward to take up arms.

Such, my brethren, ſuch, alas! is the preſent ſtate of our country: it bleeds in a thouſand veins; and without timely remedy, the wound will prove mortal. And in ſuch circumſtances, is it not our duty in the ſight of God; is it not a work to which the Lord loudly calls us, to take up arms for the defence of our country? Certainly it is: and *curſed is he* who, having no ties ſufficiently ſtrong to confine him at home, *keepeth his ſword from blood.* The man that can deſert the cauſe of his country in ſuch an exigency; his country, in the bleſſings of which he ſhared, while in peace and proſperity; and which is therefore entitled to his ſympathy and aſſiſtance in the day of its diſtreſs; that cowardly, ungrateful man ſins againſt God and his country, and deſerves the curſe of both. Such a conduct in ſuch a conjuncture, is a moral evil, a groſs wickedneſs; and expoſes the wretch to the heavy curſe of God both in this and the eternal world.

And here I cannot but obſerve, that among the various and numberleſs ſins under which the country groans, and which muſt be looked upon as the cauſes

of our public calamities, by every one that believes a divine Providence; a doctrine ſo comfortable, and ſo eſſential both in natural and revealed religion; an article in the creed of heathens and Mahometans, as well as Jews and Chriſtians;) I ſay, among theſe various ſins, cowardice and ſecurity are none of the leaſt. He that hath determined the bounds of our habitation, hath planted us in a land of liberty and plenty; a land, till lately, unalarmed with the terrors of war, and unſtained with human blood: indeed, all things conſidered, there are but few ſuch happy ſpots on our globe. And muſt it not highly provoke our divine Benefactor, to ſee a people thus diſtinguiſhed with bleſſings ſo inſenſible of their worth, ſo ungrateful for them, and ſo unacquainted with their own unworthineſs to receive them? What can be more evidential of their undue apprehenſions of the worth of theſe bleſſings, than their being ſo little concerned to ſecure and recover them! The generality among us have acted as if their intereſts at ſtake were ſo trifling, that it would not be worth while to take pains, or encounter dangers, to preſerve them. What greater evidence can be given of ingratitude than a ſupine neglect of theſe bleſſings, and ſuch a ſtupidly tame and irreſiſting reſignation of them into bloody and rapacious hands! And what can be more evidential of a proud inſenſibility of our unworthineſs of ſuch bleſſings, than our being ſo inapprehenſive of loſing them, even in the moſt threatening and dangerous circumſtances! Our countrymen in general have acted, as if beings of their importance and merit might certainly reſt in the quiet, unmoleſted poſſeſſion of their liberty and property, without any one daring to diſturb them, and without their doing any thing for their own defence; or as if neither God nor man could ſtrip them of their enjoyments. What vain, ſelf-confident preſumption, what intolerable inſolence is this, in a ſinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, who have forfeited every bleſſing, even the ground they

they tread upon, and the air they breathe in; and who live merely by the immerited grace and bounty of God. Is not cowardice and ſecurity, or an unwillingneſs to engage with all our might in defence of our country, in ſuch a ſituation, an enormous wickedneſs in the ſight of God, and worthy of his curſe, as well as a ſcandalous meanneſs in the ſight of men, and worthy of public ſhame and indignation? Is it not fit that thoſe who ſo contemptuouſly depreciate the rich and undeſerved bounties of Heaven, and who ſwell ſo inſolently with a vain conceit of their own importance and worth, ſhould be puniſhed with the loſs of theſe bleſſings! What diſcipline can be more ſeaſonable or congruous? May we not ſuppoſe, that divine Providence has permitted our body politic to ſuffer wound after wound, and baffled all our languid efforts, in order to give it ſenſibility, and rouſe us to exert our ſtrength in more vigorous efforts? Has not the curſe of God lain heavy upon our country, becauſe we have *done the work of the Lord deceitfully, and kept back our ſwords from blood?*

And ſhall this guilt increaſe from year to year, till we are entirely cruſhed with the enormous load? Shall neither the fear of Jehovah's curſe, nor the love of our country, nor even the love of ourſelves, and our own perſonal intereſt, conſtrain us at length to relieve our ravaged country, and defend the bleſſings which God has entruſted to our cuſtody, as well as lent us to enjoy?—Bleſſed be God, and thanks to you, brave ſoldiers, for what I now ſee. I ſee you engaged in this good cauſe: and may the effectual bleſſing of Heaven be upon you, inſtead of the curſe entailed upon cowardice and treachery! But are there no more to join with you? what! none more in this crowd? None more in Hanover? which I think ſhould ſhew itſelf worthy of precedence, and exhibit a brave example to other counties: this is what may reaſonably be expected, from the number of our militia, the high price of our ſtaple commodity, the frequency and variety

riety of our religious inſtructions; and, I may add, from our own former good conduct in ſuch an emergency. Hanover had the honour of ſending out the firſt company of volunteers that were raiſed in the colony.† And are we degenerated ſo ſoon? Or is our danger leſs now than immediately after Braddock's defeat? Or are we now inured and hardened to bad news, ſo that the calamities of our frontiers, which have been growing every year, have now ceaſed to be objects of our compaſſion?

I am ſorry to tell you, that the company now forming is not yet completed, though under officers from among yourſelves, from whom you may expect good uſage; and the encouragement is ſo unuſually great, and the time of ſervice ſo ſhort.‡ May I not reaſonably inſiſt upon it, that the company be made up this very day before we leave this place? Methinks your king, your country, nay, your own intereſts command me: and therefore I muſt inſiſt upon it.—Oh! for the all-prevailing force of Demoſthenes's oratory —but I recall my wiſh, that I may correct it—Oh! for the influence of the Lord of armies, the God of battles, the Author of true courage, and every heroic virtue, to fire you into patriots and ſoldiers this moment!—Ye young and hardy men, whoſe very faces ſeem to ſpeak that God and nature formed you for ſoldiers, who are free from the incumbrance of families depending upon you for ſubſiſtence, and who are perhaps but of little ſervice to ſociety while at home, may I not ſpeak for you, and declare as your mouth, "Here we are, all ready to abandon our eaſe, and ruſh into the glorious dangers of the field, in defence of our country?" Ye that love your country, enliſt; for honour will follow you in life or death in ſuch a cauſe. You that love your religion, enliſt; for your religion is in danger. Can Proteſtant Chriſtianity expect

† Under Captain Averton, immediately after General Braddock's defeat.

‡ Only till the firſt of December next,

pect quarters from heathen ſavages and French papiſts? Sure, in ſuch an alliance, the powers of hell make a third party. Ye that love your friends and relations, enliſt; leſt ye ſee them enſlaved or butchered before your eyes. Ye that would catch at money, here is a proper bait for you; ten pounds for a few months ſervice, beſides the uſual pay of ſoldiers. I ſeriouſly make the propoſal to you, not only as a ſubject of the beſt of kings, and a friend to your country, but as *a ſervant of the moſt High God;* for I am fully perſuaded, what I am recommending is his will; and diſobedience to it may expoſe you to his curſe.

This propoſal is not liable to the objections that have been urged againſt former meaſures for raiſing men. You cannot any longer object, "that you are dragged away like ſlaves againſt your wills, while others are without reaſon exempted:" for now it is left to your own honour, and you may act as free men. Nor can you object "that you are arbitrarily thruſt under the command of foreign, unknown, or diſagreeable officers:" for the gentleman that has the immediate command of this company, and his ſubordinate officers, are of yourſelves, your neighbours children, and perhaps your old companions. And I hope I may add, you need not object, that you ſhall be badly uſed: for Gentlemen-Officers, may I not promiſe for you, that not one man in your company ſhall be treated with cruelty or injuſtice, as far as your authority or influence can prevent? May I not be your ſecurity, that none but the guilty ſhall be puniſhed, and they only according to the nature of the offence? Perhaps ſome may object, that ſhould they enter the army, their morals would be in danger of infection, and their virtue would be perpetually ſhocked with horrid ſcenes of vice. This may alſo be a diſcouragement to parents to conſent to their childrens engaging in ſo good a cauſe. I am glad to hear this objection, when it is ſincere, and not an empty excuſe: and I wiſh I could remove it, by giving you an

an univerſal aſſurance that the army is a ſchool of Religion; and that ſoldiers, as they are more expoſed to death than other men, are proportionably better prepared for it than others. But, alas! the reverſe of this is too true; and the contagion of vice and irreligion is perhaps no where ſtronger than in the army; where, one would think, the ſupreme tribunal ſhould be always in view, and it ſhould be their chief care to prepare for eternity, on the ſlippery brink of which they ſtand every moment. But, Gentlemen-Officers, I muſt again appeal to you, that as for this company, you will not willingly allow any form of vice to be practiſed in it with impunity; but will always endeavour to recommend and enforce religion and good morals by your example and authority, and to ſuppreſs the contrary? May I not give the public the ſatisfaction of ſuch an aſſurance concerning you, that whatever others do, as for you and your company you will ſerve the Lord? Do you not own yourſelves bound to this in honour and duty? Such a conduct, I can aſſure you, will render you popular among the wiſe and good; though perhaps it may expoſe you to the ſenſeleſs contempt of fools, who make a mock of ſin, and who eſteem it bravery to inſult that God, *in whoſe hand their breath is, and whoſe are all their ways.* Such a conduct will afford you pleaſure in the review, when the terrors of the bloody field are ſpread around you, and death ſtarts up before you in a thouſand ſhocking forms. Such a conduct will be a ſource of true courage, and render you nobly indifferent about life or death in a good cauſe. And let me honeſtly warn you, that if you do not maintain ſuch a conduct, you will bitterly repent it, either in time or eternity.

But I return to invite others to join with you in this important expedition.—What a crowd of important arguments preſs you on every hand! What can our legiſlature do more than they have done to engage you? If ſuch unuſual encouragement does not

not prevail upon you to enliſt as volunteers, what remains but that you muſt be forced to it by authority? For our country muſt be defended: and if nothing but force can conſtrain you to take up arms in its defence, then force muſt be uſed: perſons of ſuch a ſordid, unmanly ſpirit, are not to expect the uſage of freemen.—Think what the paternal care of our ſovereign has done for us: and how many millions of money, and thouſands of men, our mother-country has furniſhed for our defence. And ſhall we do nothing for ourſelves? Great Britain, I own, is intereſted in our protection: but can ſhe be as much intereſted as ourſelves?—Conſider what the brave New England-men have done, after ſo many mortifications and diſappointments, and their treaſury ſo much exhauſted. By the beſt accounts I have had, the little colony of Maſſachuſetts-Bay has raiſed no leſs than 7000 men, though not larger perhaps than 15 or 20 of thoſe 53 counties contained in Virginia. And ſince we have the ſame intereſts at ſtake, ſhall we not cheerfully furniſh our quota for the public ſervice?—We all admire the bravery and ſucceſs of the king of Pruſſia: but his ſucceſs muſt be greatly owing to the bravery of his ſubjects, as well as his own:—he has almoſt as many ſoldiers as ſubjects. And while he has almoſt miraculouſly ſtood his ground againſt ſuch ſuperior numbers, ſhall we, with the advantage of numbers on our ſide, be perpetually flying before a pitiful enemy, and tamely give up our country to their ravages? Let us ſtrenuouſly exert that ſuperior force which a gracious Providence has put in our hands: and we may ſoon expect, through the concurrence of Heaven, that we ſhall again enjoy the bleſſings of peace. Whatever intelligence our artful enemies may ſend, or the cowardly among ourſelves may believe, there is no reaſon to conclude that the French regulars upon this continent are half ſo many as ours: and as to the *coloni*, or country-militia, we are certainly 20, perhaps 40, to one. Let us then, in the

the name of the Lord of Hoſts, the God of the armies of Iſrael, let us collect our whole ſtrength, and give one deciſive blow; and we may humbly hope victory will be ours.

Every one can complain of the bad management of our public undertakings, and lament the general ſecurity and inactivity that prevails:—every one can wiſh that ſomething were effectually done, and that this and that perſon would enliſt:—every one can tell what great atchievements he would perform, were it not for this and that, an hundred obſtructions in his way. But all this idle complaining, wiſhing, lamenting and boaſting, will anſwer no end. Something muſt be done! muſt be done by you! Therefore, inſtead of aſſuming the ſtate of patriots and heroes at home—to arms! away to the field, and prove your pretenſions ſincere. Let the thunder of this imprecation rouſe you out of your eaſe and ſecurity, *Curſed be he that doth the work of the Lord deceitfully; and curſed be he that keepeth back his ſword from blood.* God ſent an angel from heaven to curſe the daſtardly inhabitants of Meroz, who refuſed to take up arms for the defence of their country. (Judges v. 23.) *Curſe ye Meroz*, ſaid the angel of the Lord, *curſe ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof: becauſe they came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord againſt the mighty.* And ſhall this curſe fall upon Virginia? No, fly from it by venturing your lives for your country: for this curſe is far more terrible than any thing that can befal you in the field of battle.—But it is not enough for you to undertake this work: you are alſo obliged faithfully to perform it, as the work of the Lord. And this leads me,

II. To ſhew you what is that deceitful performance of the Lord's work, or unſeaſonably keeping back the ſword from blood, which expoſes to his curſe.

If ſoldiers, inſtead of abandoning their eaſe and pleaſure, and riſquing their lives in defence of their country,

country, ſhould unman themſelves with ſenſual pleaſures and debauchery; if, inſtead of ſearching out the enemy, they keep out of their way, leſt they ſhould ſearch out and find them; if they lie ſleeping or rioting in forts and places of ſafety, while their country is ravaged, perhaps in their very neigbourhood: when they waſte their courage in broils and duels among themſelves, or in tyranizing over thoſe that are under their command: when they lay themſelves open to falſe alarms, by being credulous to every account that magnifies the force of the enemy: when they are tedious or divided in their conſultation, and ſlow and faint in the execution: when they conſult rather what may be moſt ſafe for themſelves than moſt beneficial to their country: when they keep ſkirmiſhing at a diſtance, inſtead of making a bold puſh, and bringing the war to a ſpeedy iſſue by a deciſive ſtroke: when they are fond of prolonging the war, that they may live and riot the longer at the public expence: when they ſell themſelves and their country to the enemy for a bribe: in ſhort, when they do not conſcientiouſly exert all their power to repel the enemy, and protect the ſtate that employs them, but only ſeek to ſerve themſelves, then they do the work of the Lord deceitfully; and his curſe lights upon them as their heavy doom. I leave others to judge, whether the original of this ugly picture is to be found any where in the univerſe. But as for you of this company, may I not perſume that you will behave in a nobler manner? Shall not ſobriety, public ſpirit, courage, fidelity and good diſcipline, be maintained among you? This I humbly recommend to you; and may God enable you to act accordingly!

Thus far have I addreſſed you as ſoldiers, or at leaſt as perſons concerned in your ſtations to do all in your power to ſave your country. But we muſt not part thus. It is poſſible we may never meet more, till we mingle with the aſſembled univerſe before the ſupreme tribunal: therefore, before I diſmiſs you, I

muſt addreſs myſelf to you as ſinners, and as candidates for eternity. You are concerned to ſave your ſouls, as well as your country; and ſhould you ſave or gain a kingdom, or even the whole world, and loſe your ſouls, your loſs will be irreparable.

None of you I hope will reply, "I am now a ſoldier and have nothing more to do with religion:" What! has a ſoldier nothing to do with religion? Is a ſoldier under no obligations to the God that made him, and that furniſhes him with every bleſſing? Is not a ſoldier as much expoſed to death as other men? May not a ſoldier be damned for ſin as well as other ſinners? And will he be able to dwell with devouring fire and everlaſting burnings? Are theſe things ſo? Can any of you be ſo ſtupid as to think them ſo? If not, you muſt own, that even a ſoldier has as much concern with religion as another. Therefore hear me ſeriouſly upon this head.

You are about entering into the ſchool of vice: for ſuch the army has generally been. And are any of you already initiated into any of the myſteries of iniquity there practiſed? Muſt I ſo much as ſuppoſe that ſome of you, who have bravely eſpouſed the cauſe of your country, are addicted to drunkenneſs, ſwearing, whoredom, or any groſs vice? I cannot now take time to reaſon with you for your conviction: it may ſuffice to appeal to your own reaſon and conſcience, Do you act well in indulging theſe vices? Will you approve of it in the honeſt hour of death? Will this conduct prove a ſource of courage to you when the arrows of death are flying thick around you, and ſcores are falling on every ſide? No, you are ſelf-condemned; and may I not reaſonably hope, you will endeavour to reform what you cannot but condemn? Soldiers, indeed, are too commonly addicted to ſuch immoralities; but are they the better ſoldiers on that account? Can an oath or a debauch inſpire them with a rational fortitude againſt the fears of death? Would not prayer and a life of holineſs bet-

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ter anſwer this purpoſe? Their courage, if they have any, muſt be the effect, not of thought, but of the want of thought; it muſt be a brutal ſtupidity, or ferocity; but not the rational courage of a man or a Chriſtian.

Some of you, I doubt not, are happily free from theſe groſs vices: and long may you continue ſo! But I muſt tell you, this *negative* goodneſs is not enough to prepare you for death, or to conſtitute you true Chriſtians. The temper of your minds muſt be changed by the power of divine grace: and you muſt be turned from the love and practice of all ſin, to the love and practice of univerſal holineſs. You muſt become humble, broken-hearted penitents, and true believers in Jeſus Chriſt. You muſt be enabled to live righteouſly, ſoberly and godly, in this preſent evil world. This is religion: this is religion that will keep you uncorrupted in the midſt of vice and debauchery: this is religion, that will befriend you when cannons roar, and ſwords gleam around you, and you are every moment expecting the deadly wound: this is religion that will ſupport you in the agonies of death, and aſſure you of a happy immortality.

But are not ſome of you conſcious that you are deſtitute of ſuch a religion as this? Then it is high time for you to think on your condition in ſober ſadneſs. Pray to that powerful and gracious Being, who can form your hearts and lives after this ſacred model. Oh! pray earneſtly, pray frequently, for this bleſſing: and uſe all the means of grace in that manner which your circumſtances will permit.—Remember alſo, that if you try to prolong your life by a daſtardly conduct, your life will lie under the curſe of heaven; and you have little reaſon to hope you will ever improve it as a ſpace for repentance.—Remember alſo to put your confidence in God; who keeps the thread of your life, and the event of war, in his own hand. Devoutly acknowledge his providence

dence in all your ways, and be ſenſible of your dependance upon it.

And now, to conclude my addreſs to you, as the mouth of this multitude, and of your countrymen in general, I heartily bid you farewell. Farewell, my dear friends, my brave fellow-ſubjects, the guardians of your poor ravaged country. God grant you may return in ſafety and honour, and that we may yet welcome you home, crowned with laurels of victory! Or if any of you ſhould loſe your lives in ſo good a cauſe, may you enjoy a glorious and bleſſed immortality in the region of everlaſting peace and tranquillity! Methinks I may take upon me to promiſe you the prayers and good wiſhes of thouſands. Thouſands, whom you leave behind, will think of you with affectionate anxiety, will wiſh you ſucceſs, and congratulate your return, or lament your death. Once more I pour out all my heart in another affectionate farewell. May the Lord preſerve your going out, and your coming in, from this time forth, and even for evermore. Amen.

Here I thought to have concluded. But I muſt take up a few minutes more to aſk this crowd, Is there nothing to be done by us who ſtay at home, towards the defence of our country, and to promote the ſucceſs of the expedition now in hand? Shall we ſin on ſtill impenitent and incorrigible? Shall we live as if we and our country were ſelf-dependent, and had nothing to do with the ſupreme Ruler of the univerſe? Can an army of ſaints or of heroes defend an obnoxious people, ripe for deſtruction, from the righteous judgment of God? The cauſe in which theſe brave men, and our army in general, are engaged, is not ſo much their own as ours: divine Providence conſiders them not ſo much in their private perſonal character as in their public character, as the repreſentatives and guardians of their country; and therefore they will ſtand or fall, not ſo much according to their own perſonal character, as according to the

the public character of the people, whoſe cauſe they have undertaken. Be it known to you, then, their ſucceſs depends upon us, even more than upon themſelves. Therefore let us all turn every one from his evil ways. *Let the wicked forſake his way*, &c. Let us humble ourſelves under the mighty hand of God, which is lifted up over our guilty heads, that we may be exalted in due time. I could venture the reputation of my judgment and veracity, that it will never be well with our country till there be more of the fear and love of God in it, and till the name of Jeſus be of more importance among us. I could preſcribe a method for our deliverance, which is at once infallible, and alſo cheap, and ſafe, and ſo far from endangering the life of any, that it would ſecure the everlaſting life of all that comply with it. Ye that complain of the burden of our public taxes; ye that love eaſe, and ſhrink from the dangers of war; ye that wiſh to ſee peace reſtored once more; ye that would be happy beyond the grave, and live for ever, attend to my propoſal: it is this, a thorough, national reformation. This will do what millions of money and thouſands of men, with guns and ſwords, and all the dreadful artillery of death, could not do; it will procure us peace again; a laſting, well-eſtabliſhed peace. We have tried other expedients without this long enough: let us now try this new expedient, the ſucceſs of which I dare to warrant. And do not object that ſuch a general reformation is beyond your power; for a general reformation muſt begin with individuals: therefore do you, through the grace of God, act your part; begin at home, and endeavour to reform yourſelves, and thoſe under your influence.

It is a natural inference from what has been ſaid, that if the defence of our country, in which we can ſtay but a few years at moſt, and from which we muſt ere long take our flight, be ſo important a duty, then how much more are we obliged to ſeek a better country, *i. e.* an "heavenly;" and to carry on a vigorous

vigorous war againſt our ſpiritual enemies, that would rob us of our heavenly inheritance! therefore, in the name of Jeſus, the Captain of our ſalvation, I invite you all to enliſt in the ſpiritual warfare. Now proclaim eternal war againſt all ſin. Now *take to you the whole armour of God; quit you like men, be ſtrong:* and, for your encouragement, remember, *He that overcometh ſhall inherit all things;* he ſhall enter into a kingdom that cannot be ſhaken—cannot be ſhaken with thoſe ſtorms of public calamities which toſs and agitate this reſtleſs ocean of a world. In that bleſſed harbour may we all reſt at laſt!

END OF THE SERMONS.

POEMS.*

ON THE BIRTH OF JOHN ROGERS DAVIES,

THE AUTHOR'S THIRD SON.

THOU little wond'rous miniature of man,
Form'd by unerring Wiſdom's perfect plan;
Thou little ſtranger, from eternal night
Emerging into life's immortal light;
Thou heir of worlds unknown, thou candidate
For an important everlaſting ſtate,
Where this young embryo ſhall its pow'rs expand,
Enlarging, rip'ning ſtill, and never ſtand.
This glimm'ring ſpark of being, juſt now ſtruck
From nothing by the all-creating Rock,
To immortality ſhall flame and burn,
When ſuns and ſtars to native darkneſs turn;
Thou ſhalt the ruins of the worlds ſurvive,
And through the rounds of endleſs ages live.
Now thou art born into an anxious ſtate
Of dubious trial for thy future fate:
Now thou art liſted in the war of life,
The prize immenſe, and O! ſevere the ſtrife.

Another birth awaits thee, when the hour
Arrives that lands thee on th' eternal ſhore;
(And O! 'tis near, with winged haſte 'twill come,
Thy cradle rocks toward the neighb'ring tomb;)
Then ſhall immortals ſay, "A ſon is born,"
While thee as dead miſtaken mortals mourn;
From glory then to glory thou ſhalt riſe,
Or ſink from deep to deeper miſeries;
Aſcend perfection's everlaſting ſcale,
Or ſtill deſcend from gulph to gulph in hell.

Thou embryo-angel, or thou infant fiend,
A being now begun, but ne'er to end,
What boding fears a Father's heart torment,
Trembling and anxious for the grand event,
Leſt thy young ſoul ſo late by Heav'n beſtow'd,
Forget her Father, and forget her God!

Leſt,

* The following Poems are here retained as a Specimen of the Author's Poetry.

Leſt, while imprifon'd in this houſe of clay,
To tyrant luſts ſhe fall an helpleſs prey!
And leſt, deſcending ſtill from bad to worſe,
Her immortality ſhould prove her curſe!

Maker of ſouls! avert ſo dire a doom,
Or ſnatch her back to native nothing's gloom!

ON THE WORDS OF OUR LORD,

LOVEST THOU ME? JOHN xxi. 17.

MY God, the wretch that does not love thy name,
To life and being forfeits all his claim;
And may he ſink to nothing, whence he came!
Or let the yawn of the dire mouth of hell
Receive him, with his fellow-fiends to dwell!

O, if my heart does not to thee aſpire,
If aught with equal fervor I deſire,
I'm ſelf-condemn'd, and doom myſelf to fire:
Let not my guilty breath profane thine air,
Nor groaning earth the monſtrous burden bear;
Let clouds, with vengeance big, burſt o'er my head,
And vollies of red thunder ſtrike me dead;
The ſun convert his gentle rays to flames,
And blaſt the miſcreant with his vengeful beams;
The whole creation riſe in arms for Thee,
To vindicate the rights of thy divinity.

Vile wretch, that dares refuſe to love a God,
Who form'd me man out of my native clod:
Whoſe breath the faculty of love inſpir'd,
And with the heav'nly ſpark my boſom fir'd;
Whoſe uncreated beauties charm the ſight
Of gazing angels in the realms of light.

Thy glories, faintly copy'd, round me ſhine,
Great God! and beam through all theſe works of thine,
Proclaiming Thee their Origin divine:
Thy grace diffus'd around in thouſand rills,
A thouſand worlds with endleſs rapture fills:
Thou too, when man to dreadful ruin fell,
Helpleſs, unpity'd, on the brink of hell,
When frowning juſtice did the prey demand,
And none could reſcue from its vengeful hand,
Thou, touch'd with pity, didſt avert his doom,
And gave thy Son a victim in his room!
Nail'd to the croſs the bleeding Saviour hangs,
And courts my love with groans and dying pangs.

O! I

O! I muſt love—nor can the pains and blood
Of an incarnate Godhead be withſtood!

Yet ah! in ſome dark hour I ſcarcely know
Whether I love my gracious God, or no:
Gloomy ſuſpicions, painful jealouſies,
And anxious doubts in all their horrors riſe:
I hear the whiſp'rings of miſgiving fear,
"Thy love is feign'd, thine ardor inſincere."—
Too true, too true, my trembling ſoul replies,
Elſe whence ſo often could theſe languors riſe?
Ah! theſe unruly paſſions would not rove
Thus wildly were they fir'd with ſacred love,
Nor would the fervors of devotion die
So often, and my pow'rs lethargic lie.

And yet, my God, in ſome bright moment too,
Methinks I feel the flame divinely glow:
To thee my paſſions with ſuch ardor move,
That if I love Thee not, I know not what I love.
If I'm deceiv'd in this with empty ſhow,
Then my exiſtence is uncertain too;
An univerſal ſceptic I commence
Amidſt the glare of brighteſt evidence,
In ſpite of reaſon, and in ſpite of ſenſe!
O! if I love Thee not, as fears ſuggeſt,
Why am I in thine abſence thus diſtreſt?
Whence this ſtrange tumult, this uneaſy pain,
Till thy ſweet ſmiles compoſe my ſoul again?
Whence theſe wild pantings of intenſe deſire?
Or why ſhould breathing duſt ſo high aſpire?
I ſee my buſy fellow-worms purſue
Created good, and nothing nobler view;
They laviſh life away eſtrang'd from thee,
In undiſturb'd ſerene ſtupidity.
And why like them can't I contented play,
And eat, and drink, and ſleep my hours away?
Whence this immenſe ambition in my mind,
To ſcorn all joys but thoſe of heav'nly kind?
Why ſhould a worm, an animated clod,
Diſdain all bliſs beneath a boundleſs God?
O what but the attractive force of love
Thus rais'd my ſpirit to the worlds above?

Say, great Omniſcient! for thou know'ſt my heart,
Can nature charm me, if thy ſmiles depart?
Can riches, pleaſures, honours, empires, crowns,
Or friends delight me, if I feel thy frowns?
No; all creation dwindles to a toy,
And heav'n itſelf is ſtript of ev'ry joy;

The radiant ſun is darken'd to my eyes,
And ev'ry blooming beauty round me dies.

Thou great Inviſible! Thou dear Unknown!
Why thus to Thee ſhould my affections run,
Thus through the objects of my ſenſes break,
And charms unſeen, and hidden glories ſeek?
Deep in receſſes of approachleſs light
Thou ſitt'ſt enthron'd beyond my feeble ſight;
Yet drawn by ſome ſtrange myſtic influence,
I love Thee more than all that ſtrikes my ſenſe,
Than all my ears have heard, or eyes have ſeen,
Or all my fancy's livelieſt pow'rs can feign.

O! if thy love does not my heart inflame,
Why does my ſoul rejoice at Jeſus' name?
His name is muſic to my raviſh'd ears,
Sweeter than that which charms the heav'nly ſpheres;
A cheering cordial to my fainting breaſt:
My hope, my joy, my triumph, and my reſt.

I ſpring from earth, and heav'n is my abode,
When I can ſpeak thoſe charming words, "My God."
My God! celeſtial rapture's in the ſound:
Be Thou but mine, and all the ſun rolls round,
Without one ſecret murmur, I reſign;
I have enough, may I but call Thee *mine*.

O! if I love Thee not, why do I chooſe,
Why love a manſion in thine earthly houſe?
The ſacred morning ſhines with heav'nly rays,
More bright, more charming than ten thouſand days,
Which bids me viſit that delightful place:
There would I dwell, and paſs my life away,
Till death conveys me to a brighter day.

In all the inſtitutions of thy grace
For Thee I look, and long to ſee thy face:
When at thy throne I bow the ſuppliant knee,
Is pray'r a thoughtleſs, cold formality?
Or can my pray'rs content me without thee?
No; theſe are but the channels of thy grace;
Tranſparent glaſſes where I ſee thy face;
I thirſt for living waters all in vain,
Shouldſt Thou thy gracious influence reſtrain:
The radiant mirrors ſhow me nothing fair,
Unleſs I ſee my God reflected there.

Then peace, my reſtleſs and ſuſpicious heart;
And ye, dire boding jealouſies, depart:

I love

I love my God, or elſe I nothing love,
And the pure flame ere long ſhall blaze above,
And in its native element aſpire,
Without one miſt to damp, or cloud t'obſcure the fire.

A MINISTER'S REFLECTIONS ON THE DEATH OF ONE OF HIS PEOPLE.

OF my dear flock one more is gone
T'appear before th' eternal throne,
And paſs the grand deciſive teſt:
"Aſhes to aſhes, duſt to duſt:"
Surviving friends with tears intruſt
There till the gen'ral doom to reſt.

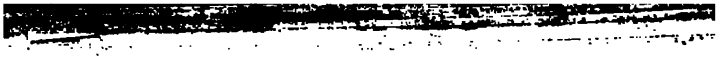
The ſoul, diſmiſs'd from cumbrous clay,
Expatiates in eternal day,
And with the Great Jehovah dwells.
The dawn of immortality
With ſcenes unknown fills all the eye,
And wonders vaſt and new reveals.

Thus while I'm dreaming life away,
Or books and ſtudies charm the day,
My flock is dying one by one;
Convey'd beyond my warning voice,
To endleſs pains, or endleſs joys;
For ever happy or undone.

I too ere long muſt yield my breath:
My mouth for ever clos'd in death,
Shall ſound the goſpel trump no more:
Then, while my charge is in my reach,
With fervor let me pray and preach,
And eager catch the flying hour!

Almighty grace, my ſoul inſpire,
And touch my lips with heav'nly fire!
Let faith, and love, and zeal ariſe!
O teach me that divineſt art,
To reach the conſcience, gain the heart,
And train immortals for the ſkies!

THE END.



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